



## Ironwood Tree *Olneya tesota*

Palo de hierro, tesota, palo fierro, comitin, and Desert Ironwood

### Description:

**Height:** up to 35 feet

**Flowers:** 9-10 mm long, 5 unequal petals, pink, purple, or white

**Leaves:** 0.5-2 cm long, pairs of 4-10 on slender twigs

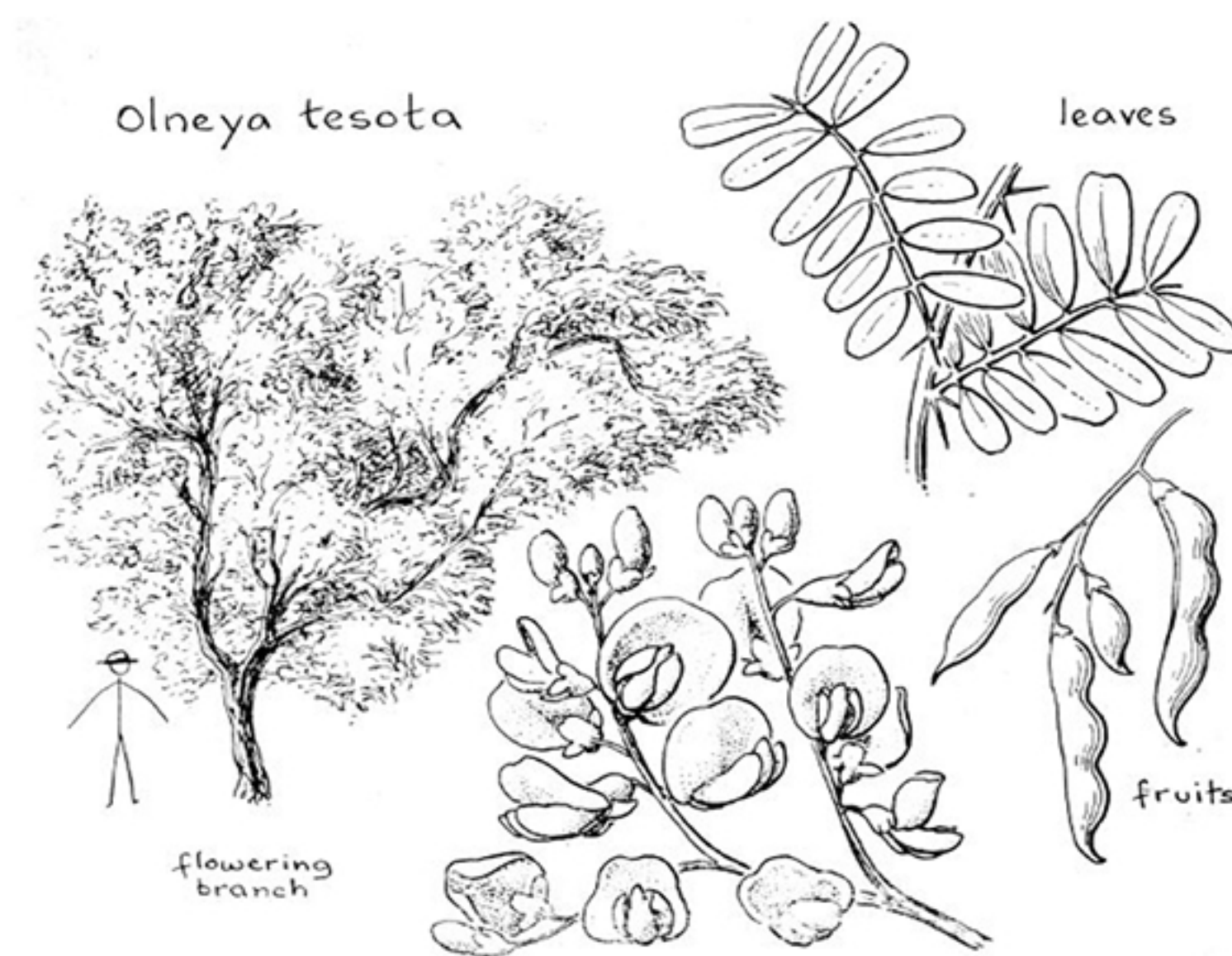
**Fruit:** 8-9 mm wide, 3-6 cm long, brown pods

**Flowering:** March-June

### Uses:

The roots from the Ironwood tree can be grounded into a paste which can then be used to cure gum infections. The leaves can be crushed to make tea that can relieve asthma. The leaves can also be eaten raw in dry/brown and green stages.

Seed pods that are grown from the tree provide high amounts of protein and can be toasted and ground to make



protein-rich flour. They can be dried, ground, and fed to chickens and goats. Additionally, when harvested dry, the seeds from the pods can be set on a dry piece of paper/fabric and gently crushed. Then, they can be winnowed and placed in a container in the freezer for two days. Afterwards, the pods can be taken out, dried thoroughly, and stored in a sealed jar. This can be done to prevent bruchid-beetle infestation. The seeds can also be used in

salads and salsas when fresh.

The tree can also be used for sheltering and tanning hides. It can also be cut for fuelwood and charcoal.

### Native Cultures:

Native peoples throughout Arizona use the Ironwood, including Seri, O'odham, and Tohono O'odham.

### Habitats:

Ironwood trees grow in flats and washes as well as sandy, rocky plains and slopes. Ironwood trees thrive in well-drained soils with deep, infrequent irrigation. They are slow growing plants but, under favorable conditions and cultivation, they can grow as much as 60 cm per year. During freezing temperatures, adult



trees lose their leaves but the branches and trunks appear unharmed. They suffer from frost damage when temperatures reach -6.5 degrees Celsius. In droughts, ironwood trees will cut off leaves, limbs, and rootlets to reduce their water needs.

### Pollinators:

The flowers attract honey bees, carpenter bees, and hummingbirds.

### Resources:

Illustration:[Clip art of diagram of Ironwood tree]. (n.d). p73a.jpg (600x522) (gutenberg.org)

Photographs: Zachary Dean