

# The Arizona Register of **Magnificent Trees**



## *Recognizing and Honoring the State's Magnificent Trees* **2024 Edition**

*Major funding for this project is provided by the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management's Urban and Community Forestry Program and USDA Forest Service. These institutions are equal opportunity providers.*

# Arizona's Magnificent Trees

The Arizona Magnificent Tree Program is dedicated to recognizing the remarkable trees that define Arizona's natural and cultural landscapes. Each year, we bring communities together to celebrate the diversity and importance of these trees, highlighting their roles in local ecosystems and history.

Each year, we recognize more incredible trees that are either the largest of their species (**Champion Trees**), have cultural significance (**Heritage Trees**), or are proven to have been in their same location before Arizona Statehood in 1912 (**Witness Trees**). This year, we are adding 20 trees to our Magnificent Tree Registry.

Witness Trees can be especially rare, but this year we recognized a new Witness Tree at Ramsey Canyon, an Arizona Sycamore nicknamed the Dancehall Tree. Read on to learn more! Program volunteers also spent time measuring the trees around the University of Arizona Arboretum, which has many interesting specimens. Some



of these trees were nominated as Champions and some as Heritage trees. We would like to extend sincere thanks to Brain Rasmussen, the Arboretum's Registrar of Collections for submitting a whopping 14 nominations!

There are always more Champions, Heritage, and Witness Trees waiting to be discovered. Submit your nominations today on this form: [AZ Mag Tree Nominations](#). If you are interested in becoming a Champion Tree Hunter or Volunteer, please contact the Arizona Magnificent Tree Coordinator at [ucf@dffm.az.gov](mailto:ucf@dffm.az.gov).

# Definitions

## Witness Trees



Witness Trees are trees that are proven to have been in their same location **before Arizona's Statehood**. These trees are a living connection from the past to the present.

## Heritage Trees



Heritage Trees have **cultural significance** and a direct connection to people. Trees are significant in rural and urban areas for many reasons. They may have been placed in memory of a person or event, given as a gift to the community, or planted where a significant event occurred.

## Champion Trees



Champion Trees are the **largest of their species** in the state and in some cases, the nation! If the species qualifies, Champion Trees are also submitted to the National Champion Tree Program for recognition.

# Arizona Sycamore

## *Platanus wrightii*



The "Dancehall Tree," an Arizona Sycamore, is estimated to be more than 250 years old. The story is that in the early 1900s, William Berner built a dance hall and pavilion that wrapped around the tree's trunk, extending across the creek. Today, the tree thrives along the creek at The Nature Conservancy's Ramsey Canyon Preserve. With a canopy stretching approximately 130 feet and easily accessible to the public it provides a striking example of the species for the preserve's many visitors. Standing in its presence within the canyon, it is hard to not be in awe. TNC's Ramsey Canyon Preserve will be celebrating a 50-year history in 2025, a small sliver of time this magnificent tree has been witness to the area.

Circumference

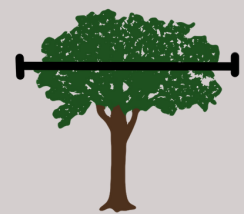
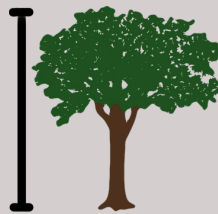
**336 in**

Height

**93 ft**

Crown Spread

**130 ft**



# Baobab

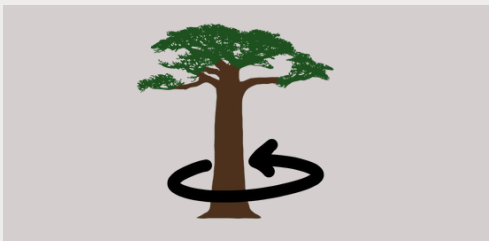
*Adansonia za*



Despite how many scratches this tree may get, you'll rarely see its wood exposed because the *Adansonia za* is the only tree that can regenerate its bark (1)! The Baobab was nominated by Brian Rasmussen, the curator at the University of Arizona Arboretum.

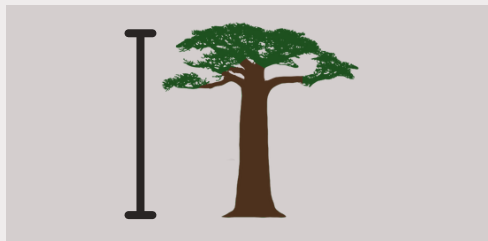
Circumference

**88 in**



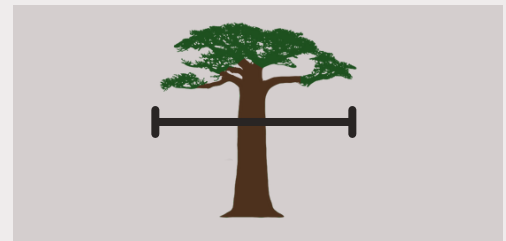
Height

**36.8 ft**



Crown Spread

**12 ft**



# Floss Silk

*Ceiba insignis*



The White Floss Silk Tree has distinctive, conical thorns - or prickles - which help it survive in spite of animals who see it as a delectable treat (2).

*Ceiba insignis* is native to South America but this tree in particular has found its home at the University of Arizona Arboretum (2). Brian Rasmussen, the curator at the University of Arizona Campus Arboretum, nominated this tree, perhaps noticing that it is almost 20 feet taller than a typical White Floss Silk Tree!

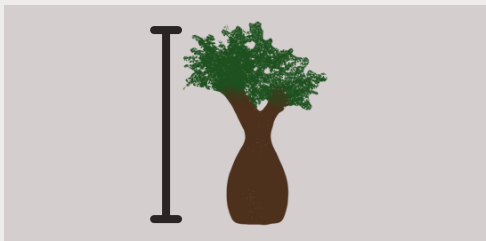
Circumference

**141 in**



Height

**48.5 ft**



Crown Spread

**31.7 ft**



# Calabash

## *Crescentia alata*



The branches of the Calabash almost look like a fern! Each of the many branches have thousands of small leaves. In a fascinating way, the flowers don't accompany the leaves. Instead, they bloom from the woody branches of the tree. (3)

If a bat pollinates the flower, it will develop into a fruit and ripen on the ground. The color and shape are reminiscent of a giant tennis ball, but inside there is a black-purple slimy substance containing the mature seeds. (3)

This tree was nominated by Brain Rasmussen who keeps collection records at the University of Arizona Campus Arboretum.



Circumference

**39 in**



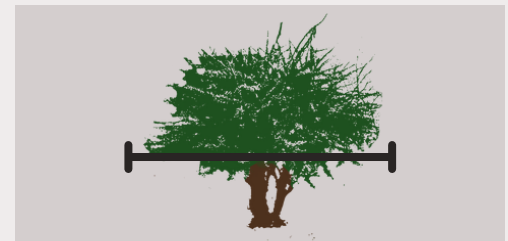
Height

**25 ft**



Crown Spread

**35.5 ft**



# Live Oak

*Quercus virginiana*



*Quercus virginiana* is the most well-known type of live oak (4). Its shape is impressive, with its large branches often stretching out widely and weighing heavily towards the ground (4). This tree is located in the University of Arizona Campus Arboretum, along the Park Avenue green belt. Thank you to Brian Rasmussen at the Campus Arboretum for recognizing this magnificent tree!

Circumference

**102.5 in**

Height

**60 ft**

Crown Spread

**64.4 ft**



# Cork Oak

## *Quercus suber*



The Cork Oak is best known for being the source for commercial cork production! Cork can be harvested once the tree is 30-40 years old. These trees, at maturity, boast massive branches that support beautiful, thick arrangements of leaves (5). Brain Rasmussen at the University of Arizona Campus Arboretum nominated this incredible tree.



Circumference

**56 in**



Height

**37.5 ft**



Crown Spread

**27.6 ft**



# Sinaloan Silk

*Albizia sinaloensis*



The Sinaloan Silk is native to certain hot Mexican states (6). Younger trees of this type will die in 20°F weather; thankfully, the lowest temperature Tucson has ever experienced was 19°F in 2003 (6). Thank you to the University of Arizona Campus Arboretum and Brian Rasmussen for this nomination!

Circumference

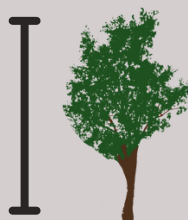
**140 in**

Height

**80 ft**

Crown Spread

**93 ft**



# Chinese Pistache

*Pistacia chinensis*



The Chinese Pistache does indeed come from China, but it does not produce pistachios (7)! Located near Old Main at the University of Arizona, this tree probably sees thousands of people every day! The University of Arizona Campus Arboretum nominated this tree.

Circumference

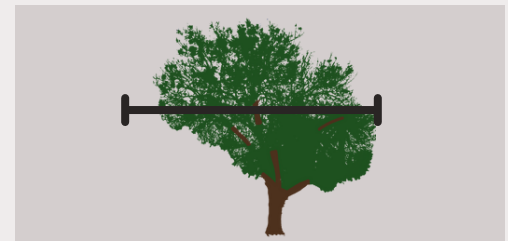
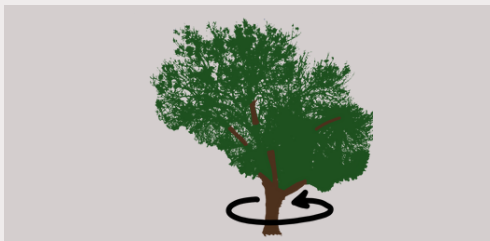
**101 in**

Height

**41 ft**

Crown Spread

**72 ft**



# Crested Saguaro

*Carnegiea gigantea crestatata*



The characteristic “crown” of this cactus has caused much debate by biologists (8)! Some say that it caused by a lightning strike or freeze damage, while others attribute this trait to a genetic mutation (8). It’s a fairly rare but natural case, occurring only once for every 250,000 Saguaro (8). This Crested Saguaro was nominated by the University of Arizona Campus Arboretum.



Circumference

**43 in**



Height

**11.1 ft**



Crown Spread

**3 ft**



# Golden Shower Tree

*Cassia fistula*



The name of the Golden Shower Tree comes from the beautiful yellow flowers that will appear to taper off from its branches in May and September (9). The University of Arizona Campus Arboretum nominated this tree, which stands proudly there!

Circumference

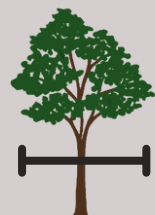
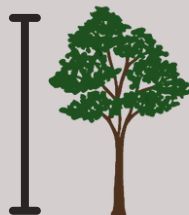
**17 in**

Height

**34.9 ft**

Crown Spread

**25.6 ft**



# Kapok

*Ceiba aesculifolia*



A plant's bloom color is not random! The Kapok tree's white flowers mean its nocturnal pollinators, like bats, can find sources of nectar more easily in the dark! In fact, flowers will only open in the late evening and close in daytime. In turn, the Kapok is pollinated and now has the opportunity to reproduce. (10)

Kapok has fuzzy, green fruit shaped like large tear drops (10). The University of Arizona Campus Arboretum nominated this tree for its large height and width!



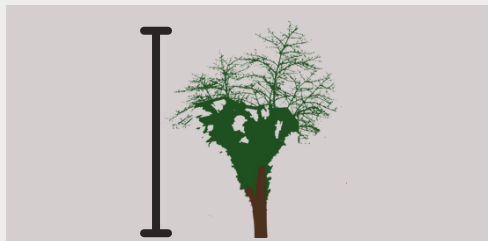
Circumference

**74 in**



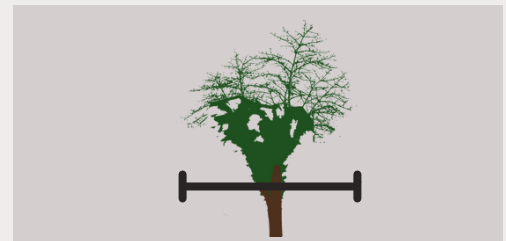
Height

**67 ft**



Crown Spread

**73 ft**



# Common Fig

*Ficus carica*



This spectacular Common Fig is located in front of the tallest building at the University of Arizona, Gould Simpson, pictured on the right. The University of Arizona Campus Arboretum nominated this tree for its great wide crown spread.

Circumference

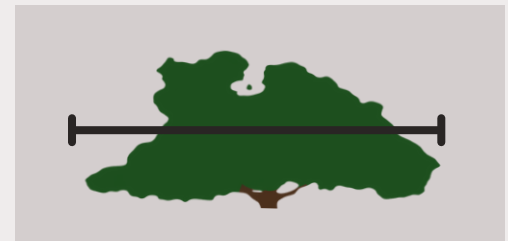
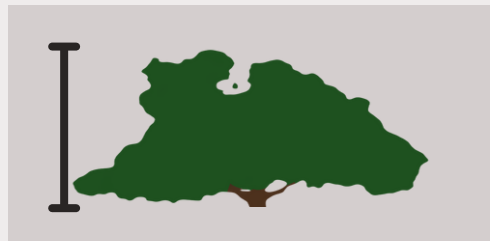
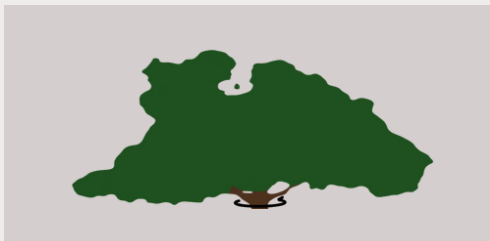
**86 in**

Height

**17.5 ft**

Crown Spread

**28.3 ft**



# Rock Fig

*Ficus petiolaris*



Though it stands 41 feet tall here, this tree can be shaped and cultivated as a bonsai (11)! The Rock Fig bears fruit which were an important food for the aboriginal people of Australia (12). This tree was suggested by The University of Arizona Arboretum for nomination.

Circumference

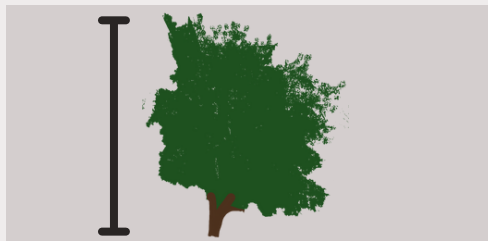
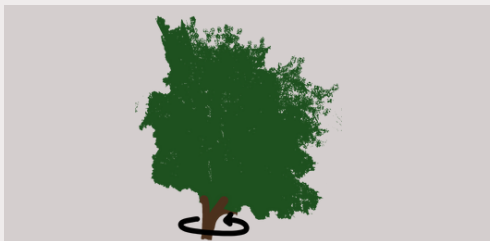
**40 in**

Height

**41 ft**

Crown Spread

**35.95 ft**



# Gold Medallion Tree

*Cassia leptophylla*



This graceful tree is known for the huge amounts of yellow flowers it produces in the fall (13)! Gold Medallion is a fitting name for such a tree! Thanks to the University of Arizona Campus Arboretum for this nomination.

Circumference

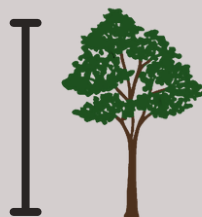
**17 in**

Height

**30 ft**

Crown Spread

**28.05 ft**



# True Date Palm

## *Phoenix Dactylifera*



Coming from the Middle East, this tree produces sweet, fibrous dates. So, while this tree may be planted for beauty, it's also a popular crop to cultivate for food! Interestingly, this plant's flowers can be male, female, or both. Male flowers are waxy and off-white while female flowers are a true white. (14)

The University of Arizona Campus Arboretum nominated this tree as it is part of the University's Arboretum.

Circumference

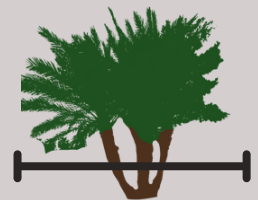
**236 in**

Height

**33 ft**

Crown Spread

**34 ft**



# American Sycamore

## *Plantanus occidentalis*



The seedling of this tree was planted in 1976 after returning from a long trip. How long? This seed journeyed all the way to the moon and back aboard the Apollo 14 mission. This American Sycamore symbolizes the major role forests played in developing our American Heritage and vital role forests have in our future. This tree is also called the Bicentennial Moon Tree, fittingly located next to the Flandreu Science Center and Planetarium!

Circumference

**64 in**



Height

**24 ft**



Crown Spread

**29 ft**



# Bunya-bunya

## *Araucaria bidwillii*



The bunya tree is a slow growing conifer with massive cones. This tree produced its first cone in 2023, and it was nearly a foot long! The bunya was used ceremonially by the native peoples within its range, who considered it a sacred tree (17).



Professor Phil Ogden in Range Management donated the campus Bunya-Bunya after raising it as a house plant. It found its final home outside the Yuma Dormitories where it thrived until it was hit with hurricane force winds (>80 mph) that hit campus in July 2024 during a monsoon (17). While this tree is now marked as deceased in the registry, we decided it deserved its moment in the spotlight and kept it in the report!



Circumference

**58 in**



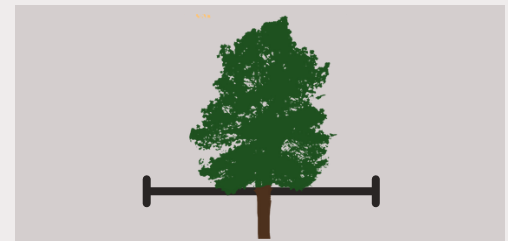
Height

**59 ft**



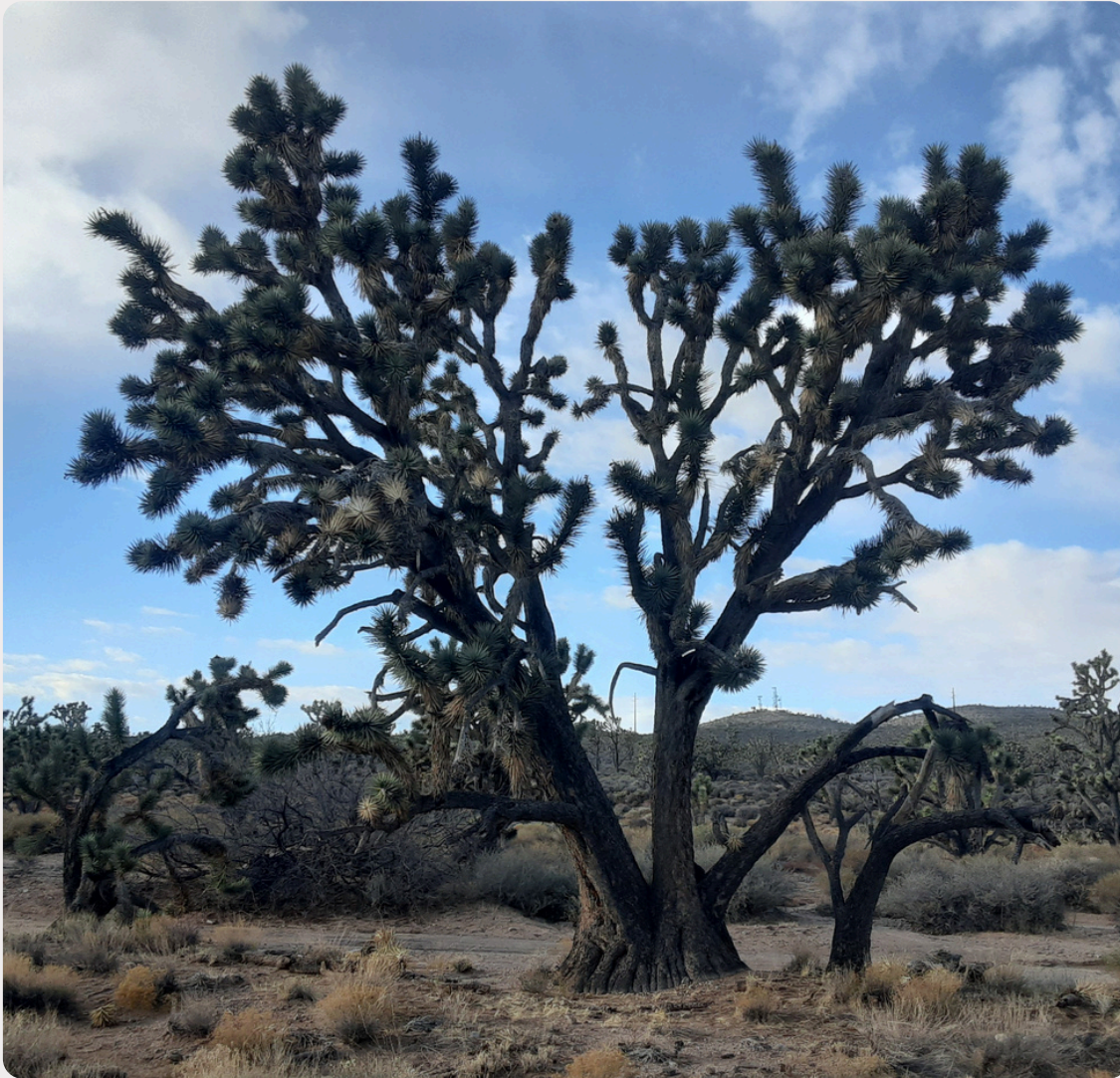
Crown Spread

**33 ft**



# Eastern Joshua Tree

*Yucca Jaegeriana*



This champion Eastern Joshua Tree is located near Lake Mead City in Arizona's Joshua Tree Forest on BLM land. Joshua trees are an icon of the Mohave Desert. Joshua tree reproduction depends entirely on pollination by a tiny moth the size of a rice grain! (15)



Circumference

**169 in**

Height

**28 ft**

Crown Spread

**30 ft**



# Jumping Cholla

*Cylindropuntia fulgida*



This cactus has such delicate joints that the segments are said to “jump” onto your clothing or skin if you aren’t careful! (16)

These segments will take root and grow, spreading easily across the landscape. The cholla cactus fruits and seeds are enjoyed by many different desert wildlife. Interestingly, the fruits are considered to be berries and its blooms are pink! (16)

Gene Zonge nominated this new champion after seeing it along the side of a road near Sahuarita.

Circumference

**37 in**

Height

**13 ft**

Crown Spread

**14 ft**



# Ponderosa Pine “Hope”

*Pinus ponderosa*



This Ponderosa pine was nominated by State Parks staff at Fool’s Hollow Lake. This particular ponderosa is special to the park because of an injured Aberts Squirrel that was nursed by Parks staff for some time before succumbing to its injuries. The squirrel, nicknamed “Hope”, was buried under this majestic multi-trunked Ponderosa!

Arizona is home to the largest contiguous Ponderosa pine forest in the world. Next time you see a Ponderosa, give it a sniff between the bark, it smells like vanilla!

Circumference

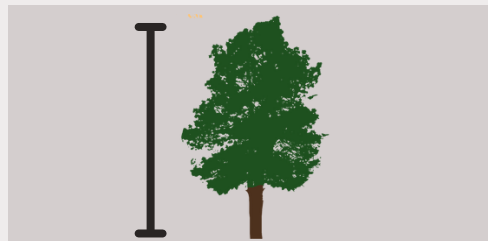
**10 in**

Height

**77 ft**

Crown Spread

**50 ft**



## References

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<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=b641>
8. McDonald, C. (n.d.). *Plant of the Week: Saguaro (Carnegiea gigantea)*. U.S. Forest Service.  
[https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/plant-of-the-week/carnegiea\\_gigantea.shtml](https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/plant-of-the-week/carnegiea_gigantea.shtml)
9. *Find Trees & Learn | University of Arizona Campus Arboretum*. (n.d.-e).  
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10. *Find Trees & Learn | University of Arizona Campus Arboretum*. (n.d.-f).  
<https://apps.cals.arizona.edu/arboretum/taxon.aspx?id=437>
11. *Ficus petiolaris - Plant Finder*. (n.d.).  
<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=282732>
12. Northern Territory Government. (2018, March 25). *Rock fig or native fig*. Alice Springs Desert Park. <https://alicespringsdesertpark.com.au/connect-with-nature/plants/plants/rock-fig-or-native-fig#:~:text=The%20leaves%20are%20thick%2C%20leathery,Aboriginal%20people%20in%20Central%20Australia>.
13. *Cassia leptophylla - Plant Finder*. (n.d.).  
<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=280438>
14. *Find Trees & Learn | University of Arizona Campus Arboretum*. (n.d.-g).  
<https://apps.cals.arizona.edu/arboretum/taxon.aspx?id=207>
15. "Eastern" Joshua trees and their sole pollinators, "eastern" Yucca moths | U.S. Geological Survey. (n.d.). <https://www.usgs.gov/centers/southwest-biological-science-center/science/eastern-joshua-trees-and-their-sole-pollinators>
16. *Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center - the University of Texas at Austin*. (n.d.).  
[https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=CYFUF](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=CYFUF)
17. "Araucaria Bidwillii." *Find Trees & Learn*, University of Arizona Campus Arboretum, 2012, <https://apps.cals.arizona.edu/arboretum/taxon.aspx?id=474>.

