

Blue Palo Verde

GENERAL

Origin	: Mediterranean, sub-tropical
Vigour	: fairly fast growing
Humidity	: extremely arid, very arid, semi-arid, semi-humid
Propagation	: sowing and pricking out
Maintenance	: moderate

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: resistant
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: medium
Salinity/ppm	: moderate (1800 ppm)
Hardiness	: -9°C

SHAPE

Type	: tree, shrub
Height	: 5 m-9 m
Spread	: 5 m-9 m
Foliage	: deciduous

FLOWER

Colour	: bright yellow
Size	: 1 cm - 2 cm
Period	: March - April

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: pod
Fruit size	: 9 cm - 8 cm

Native to the Sonoran and Mojave deserts of Arizona and California, *Cercidium* species are not only some of the most drought-tolerant of trees, but are also outstanding flowerers, deserving to be used much more prominently in Arriyadh. Not often planted in Saudi Arabia, *C. floridum* is nearly always mistaken for the very common *Parkinsonia aculeata* (Jerusalem Thorn), which in many ways is quite similar. However, with careful observation, it is noticeable that the smooth, bright-green bark of *Cercidium* is different to that of *Parkinsonia*. *C. floridum* is to be found in the central median of the King Khalid International Airport highway. This slow-growing tree reaches a height of 9 metres with equal spread, and is deciduous in dry and cold spells. When it loses its fine-textured foliage, the dense, green and spiny twigs give it the appearance of an ever-green. Fragrant masses of bright-yellow, pea-shaped flowers are a wonderful sight covering the whole tree in spring. They are followed by pods. The blue palo verde withstands great heat and intense sun; drought-tolerant once established, deep watering on a regular basis during the growing season encourages faster growth and spectacular flower displays. It tolerates alkaline soils and is moderately frost-tolerant. It is propagated by seed, which germinates readily once the hard seed coat is scarified. Blue Palo verde is a beautiful, small shade tree providing stunning spring colour. It is useful for road and footpath planting, and as an accent in gardens, courtyards and parks.

