

Candlebush, *Emperor's Candlesticks*

GENERAL

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

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: vulnerable
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: medium
Salinity/ppm	: moderate (2000 ppm)
Hardiness	: -9°C

SHAPE

Type	: shrub, tree
Height	: 2 m-4 m
Spread	: 3 m-6 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: deep yellow
Size	: 3 cm - 5 cm
Period	: July - October

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: pod
Fruit size	: 20 cm

This Argentinean native is well adapted to desert climates. Up to 50 cm long, its compound leaves make a lush impact. Generally evergreen, the Emperor's Candlestick's leaves may be shed in cold winters, but frosts known to occur in Arriyadh do not damage the branches. Without pruning, the plants form sprawling shrubs up to 4 metres high and 6 metres wide. In locations protected from strong winds, they may be trained as standard trees that eventually form picturesque, umbrella-shaped crowns. Showy spikes of bright-yellow flowers appear at the end of the shoots; these stick out like torches, and give the plants another common name, Candle Bush. The inflorescences are up to 3 cm across and are borne mainly in summer, but last well into the autumn. Pollination is done by butterflies, followed by brown, elongated pods some 30 cm long. Seeds germinate readily, providing numerous offspring both in cultivation and when escaping to invade the vicinity. Another method of multiplication is hardwood cuttings planted in winter. Soils may be low in nutrients, but need to be well drained. To achieve fast growth and a splendid floral display, this plant may be pampered by providing sufficient water and fertiliser. This way, plants quickly form dense hedges suitable for screening. Hard pruning in winter leads to proliferated growth in spring. The plants revel in full sun and heat, adjusting their vigour to almost any condition. Candle Bushes are robust in urban microclimates, and are good accent plants in parks and gardens.

