

EAT

Although they can be eaten raw, seeds in either stage are most easily digested when sprouted or cooked. Serve green ironwood like edamame after blanching them in their pods. They can also be sautéed or roasted with seasoning, served as garnishes, or used in salads or soups.

Dry seeds are best eaten sprouted, or sprouted and then parched/roasted. To sprout seeds, soak them overnight and then rinse daily till seed coat splits open and sprout emerges. Remove sprouts by squeezing the split seed-coat. Rinse with clean water and then use raw or lightly cooked. To parch/roast: Sprout seeds just until the tiny root emerges (one to two days). Dry seeds in the sun, solar oven, or conventional oven set to 150° F. Once dry, put seeds in a dry skillet over medium heat to cook. Season with salt or other spices.

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DESERT HARVESTERS is a volunteer-run, grassroots effort in Tucson, AZ. We strive to promote, celebrate, and enhance, local food security and production by encouraging the planting of indigenous, food-bearing shade trees in water-harvesting earthworks, and then educating the public on how to harvest and process the bounty.

For more information about harvesting wild, cultivated, and native foods from the Sonoran Desert visit: www.DesertHarvesters.org.



THE DESERT CAN FEED YOU



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www.DesertHarvesters.org
Now go eat some desert.

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DESERT IRONWOOD

FREE

ABUNDANT

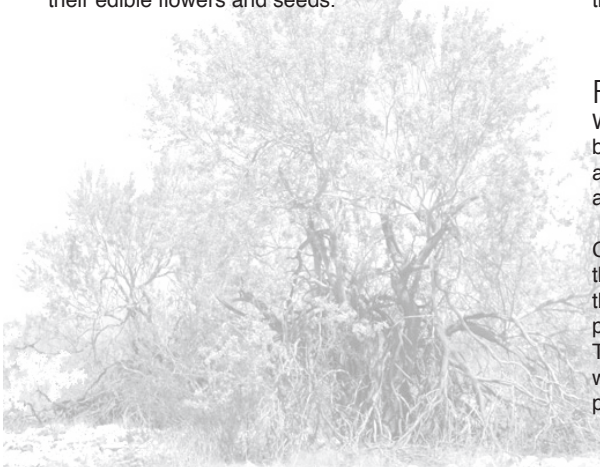
NATIVE

DESERT IRONWOOD

Desert ironwood, *Oleyna tesota*, is one of the oldest and most intriguing trees of the Sonoran Desert. Named for its dark, dense wood, the ironwood can be recognized by its grey bark, small dark-green leaves, small thorns, and lovely pink blooms. The tree is now a protected species in Arizona. It grows at elevations below 2500 feet, often in xeri-riparian areas.

PLANT

Desert ironwoods are great trees for the home landscape. Mostly evergreen, they provide shade, cooling, and habitat for native birds. Plant a five-gallon desert ironwood in a basin to catch the rain and once established (after two to three years) it will need no additional water. They are prized among desert harvesters for their edible flowers and seeds.



HARVEST

Like other leguminous desert trees, ironwood flowers and seeds are edible. Ironwoods generally flower late April through May and then set green seed pods a few weeks after. The green pods will dry in June/July. Both green and dry pods can be harvested.

Moist green seeds are found inside light-beige pods. Seeds should be sweet and slightly peanuty tasting. If so, gently pull whole pods off the tree. If they taste chalky, you've waited too long. Let them dry on the tree and harvest when they are dry and brown.

Dry, brown seeds are hard and found inside dry pods, which are fuzzy and brown and easy to harvest. Rather than picking by hand, you can put a tarp on the ground and gently shake free the dry pods. Avoid harvesting dry pods/seeds that were already on the ground.

PROCESS & STORE

Whether green or dry, ironwood seeds should be cleaned and processed for storage as soon as possible after picking to preserve freshness and reduce the chances of the pods molding.

GREEN PODS/SEEDS should be blanched the day you pick them to prevent ripening to the brown stage. They can be blanched in the pod or shelled like peas and then blanched. To do this, wash your pods or seeds in cool water. Bring a pot of water to a boil. Meanwhile, prepare a large bowl of ice water. Add green



seeds to boiling water and boil for at least 90 seconds. Remove, drain and immediately place seeds in ice water for 90 seconds. Once cooled, drain and package in labeled and dated plastic freezer bags, getting out as much air as possible.

DRY, BROWN PODS/SEEDS are also best processed the day you pick them, but can also be stored in an unsealed container outside until processing. Do not store in a plastic bag or they will mold! To store dry seeds, free them from the pod by hand or by laying them on a clean tarp, covering them with a sheet and walking on it. Winnow out the seed pod leaving just the dry, dark brown seed. Freeze seeds for two days to prevent bruchid beetle infestation. Store in the freezer until use or dry thoroughly and store in a sealed jar.