

EAT

Although they can be eaten raw, seeds in either stage are most easily digested when sprouted or cooked. Serve green Palo Verde seeds 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, Arizona. 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.

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PALO VERDE



FREE

ABUNDANT

NATIVE

THE DESERT CAN FEED YOU



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www.DesertHarvesters.org
Now go eat some desert.

PALO VERDE

Palo Verde is Spanish for “green pole” because the trunk and branches are green. In Arizona there are two native Palo Verde species the Foothill Palo Verde (*Cercidium microphyllum*) and the Blue Palo Verde (*Cercidium floridum*).

In the desert, Foothill Palo Verde is found on rocky slopes and Blue Palo Verde along washes. Both species make great nurse trees, providing protection, for other native plants such as baby saguaro.

Both species are excellent landscaping trees that provide shade and cooling as well as native bird habitat and food. Plant them next to a rainwater harvesting basin. Once the tree is established after two years, it needs no additional water.

IDENTIFY

Foothill Palo Verde trees have a yellow-green trunk, tiny leaves, and spine at the end of each branch. Their seeds are large with a seed pod that constricts around them.

Blue Palo Verde trees have a blue-green trunk, larger leaves, small spines along the branch at the leaf nodes, and no spine at the end of the branch. Blue Palo Verde seed pods are larger than the Foothill seed pods, and the pod does not constrict around the seeds.



HARVEST

Like other leguminous desert trees, both species produce edible flowers and seeds. Many find the Foothill's seeds to be sweeter. The trees generally flower in 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, preferably before the summer monsoon rains start.

Harvest **green Palo Verde seeds** when the pod is green and the seed inside has developed but is still small, green, and tender. Taste seeds first! They should be sweet. If the pods are chalky, it's too late. Best to let them dry even longer. Gently pull the whole pod off the tree and place in a canvas or paper bag, bucket or basket.

Dry pods are beige, and the seeds inside are brown. 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, Palo Verde 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 and drying to the brown stage. They can be blanched whole or shelled like peas. To blanch, 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 about 90 seconds. Remove, drain and immediately place seeds in ice water. Once cooled, drain and package in 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 you process. 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.