

Divi divi - *Caesalpinia coriaria*

General information: This is the national tree of Curacao. In sheltered locations, the tree is symmetrical with a spreading mounded top as shown in the illustration. Exposed to the prevailing winds, however, it leans away from the wind, and its top, growing mostly to the lee side, appears to be blown out horizontally in the wind. In this characteristic it can be confused with *Crescentia cujete* (calabash tree) which may do the same. The pods are a rich source of tannin. As a tree it grows to approximately 30 feet tall.

Leaves alternate, 2x even-pinnate; leaflets numerous, regularly nearly touching to overlapping; each less than 1/2" long. The leaf is as fine as the Sweet acacia. Flowers are small, in terminal clusters, white or yellow, pea-like, inconspicuous, very fragrant and attractive to bees. Fruit are small curved, dished, or twisted flat pod with rounded ends, about 1 in. wide; often little longer than wide. The trunk and branches are gnarled, with gray bark.

Family: Leguminosai, Caesalpinioideae.

Lighting: Full sun.

Temperature: Warm, do not like temperatures below 40 degrees F and will drop most leaves easily if too cold, but the new growth comes back nice and colorful.

Carolyn Carver's personal experience with Divi-divi. They are leggy, and twiggy and extremely slow to trunk up. The new growth is exceptionally beautiful, a copper, pink color. I have been working a large, 13 year old one, it's about 24" tall, 1 1/2" caliper and wired in a weeping style. The branches are very thin and brittle and I always end up cracking them but they recover and leaf out. The creamy bloom is very sweet and pretty, but it's the bright colored new growth that attracts attention. They are beautifully delicate.



Divi divi bonsai



Divi divi growing in wild

Bibliography:

200 Tropical Plants of the Caribbean. Illustrated with Photographs
Reproduced in Full Color by John M. Kingsbury. Bullbrier Press, Ten Snyder
Heights, Ithaca, NY 14850, 1988.

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