



Fast Facts!
Tamarisk Tree
Tamarix ramosissima
 In the Waterwise Garden

- Tamarix is the old Latin name: *ramosissima* means “most densely branched”.
- Its distinct feathery pale pink flowers make this very invasive plant appear harmless. However, it is often blamed for altering wildlife habitats once dominated by willows, cottonwoods, mesquite and other natives, and increasing the number of wildfires.
- Also known as salt cedar, *Tamarix* species are fire-adapted, and have long tap roots that allow them to intercept deep water tables and exploit natural water resources. They limit competition from other plants by taking up salt from deep ground water, accumulating it in their foliage, and from there depositing it in the surface soil where it builds up concentrations temporarily detrimental to some plants.
- High salt level in tamarisk infiltrates the soil preventing other plants from growing, creating a tamarisk dominant forest with no understory, void of important habitat for pollinators and other native species. Tamarisk forests also tend to burn hotter than most native riparian trees; acres of uninterrupted tamarisk are a fire hazard and a risk to human structures. Salt cedar invades springs, ditches, and streambanks.
- The U.S. cavalry planted Tammy trees everywhere to alter both the water line and to usurp the Navajo natural support environment.
- The serious direct impacts of salt cedar are numerous: now taking over and displacing native plants, specifically cottonwood. The loss of these native species to tamarisk eventually leads to a net loss of water. The tamarisk leaf beetle now threatens the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and other birds that have adapted to the non-native tamarisk that grows so thick along some of the region’s rivers. The beetles can strip a tree of its leaves, ruining it as a home for the birds.
- The maxim “right plant right place” rings true with the Tamarix.
- Visit http://www.columbia.edu/itc/cerc/danoff-burg/invasion_bio/inv_spp_summ/Tamarix_ramosissima.html or https://wric.ucdavis.edu/information/crop/natural%20areas/wr_T/Tamarix.pdf for more information.