**Featured Plant**

**Common Name:** HoneyLocust  
**Scientific Name:** *Gleditsia triacanthos*

Honeylocust is an excellent deciduous tree for both commercial and residential plantings across Arizona (suitable for USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 3-9). It has few pests, an interesting branching pattern, tolerates our summer heat, and has moderate irrigation requirements.

Honeylocust is native to the eastern U.S. from eastern Texas north to South Dakota east to Pennsylvania and back south roughly following the Appalachian Mountains then south to Mississippi and Louisiana. Over its native range, it seldom grows in pure stands and tends to prefer the river valleys and floodplains. Even though it’s from the humid eastern U.S., it performs well in Arizona.

Honeylocust is a member of the pea/bean (Leguminosae) family. It produces seeds in long, flat, twisted pods. The seeds have impermeable coats and do not readily germinate until the seed coat has been mechanically broken or it has passed through the gut of an animal. This is true for many seeds in this family: mesquite, palo verde, catclaw, lupine, etc. Native grown honeylocust saplings produce woody spines which are undesirable in landscape situations. As these trees mature, they tend to produce fewer spines. However, when cuttings are grown from thorn-less portions of mature trees they tend to remain thornless.

Honeylocust cultivars that have no thorns are much favored by bees and the juicy pulp up to the trunk. The sweet smelling flowers are much favored by bees and the juicy pulp between the seeds within the pods is relished by cattle and wildlife. The wood is very hard, very heavy, and resistant to decay. It is used occasionally for furniture, fence posts and railroad ties. Because Arizona is outside of honeylocust’s native range, there are relatively few pest management issues.

**Featured Bird**

**Common Name:** White-crowned Sparrow  
**Scientific Name:** *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

White-crowned Sparrow is well to the north including the extreme northern states from both coasts to the Arctic, the higher western mountains and the northern region along the west coast. Once its seasonal fall and winter movement south begins, this sparrow becomes one of the most abundant during this period in Arizona.

The initial arrival of the White-crowned Sparrow to its southern winter residence in Arizona and south into Mexico is most often first noted by its clear, lovely song which it sings throughout this season. During this period the birds flock and feed and their continued presence is noted as much time is spent singing. Before moving south and still in their nesting area, the first year birds, in their early formative months, learn and perfect vocalization characteristics that ultimately produce a variation or dialect nearly matching their father and other nearby males.

These rather large, pale, adult White-crowned Sparrows arrive in fall after completing a fresh molt revealing a handsome basic plumage, and, as its common name implies, with distinctive alternating black and white crown strips. The young first year birds on arrival, however, are quite distinct from the adults by displaying brown and buffy crown strips, but by early spring they begin their molt, transforming them into an alternate plumage with aspects of an adult. Two Greek terms, *leucos*, “white” and *ophrys*, “eyebrow” comprise the specific name which describes the white line above the eye.

Although he never visited North America, German naturalist Johann Reinhold Forster (1729-1798), is credited for describing the White-crowned Sparrow. In 1772, while in England, he described this sparrow in a publication which included several other North American birds. The specimens were sent by Hudson’s Bay Company employees located near the Severn River area which drains east into the great, shallow Hudson Bay. In the same year, Forster’s energies and contributions to science were again noted for him, along with his son Johann Georg Adam, joined Captain Cook’s second voyage around the world to study South African, Antarctic, New Zealand and Pacific island birds.