

***Aloysia virgata*** (H.R. Lopez & J.A. Pavón.) A.L. de Jussieu  
(*Verbena virgata*)

## Almond Verbena

**Other Common Names:** Incense Bush, Sweet Almond Verbena, White Almond Bush.

**Family:** Verbenaceae.

**Cold Hardiness:** Almond Verbena is a herbaceous perennial or dieback shrub in USDA zone 8 grading to a large woody shrub or small tree in subtropical or tropical climates, zones 9 to 11.

**Foliage:** Evergreen, semi-evergreen, or deciduous; opposite or subopposite; simple; 3 to 4 long; tips acute; bases rounded to broadly acute; scabrous and dark lustrous green above, fuzzy pubescent and lighter green beneath; leaves are stiff with margins scalloped to nearly serrate and overall undulate; the pinnate veins are impressed above and raised beneath; overall coloration of summer foliage is gray-green to medium green, but no fall color develops.

**Flower:** Dense 4 to 8 long axillary racemes of whorls of tiny white salverform flowers which emit a sweet almond or vanilla-like fragrance; flowers are borne in successive whorls of five; the fragrance is very strong, permeating an sizable zone downwind from a plant; recurrent flushes of flowers occur almost continuously from spring to fall.

**Fruit:** Tiny dry nutlets; not ornamental; deadheading is not necessary to maintain bloom.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — stiff; medium thickness; four-sided; initially green covered with clear to white fuzzy pubescence; later losing the pubescence and developing numerous lenticels; older branches are a smooth tan-brown with gray lenticels; Buds — divergent; very small,  $\frac{1}{16}$  or less; foliose; pubescent; green to brown; flattened beneath where they press against the petiole; Bark — green to brown; often with numerous gray lenticels.

**Habit:** *Aloysia virgata* is a moderately coarse textured upright multi-stem shrub with arching secondary branches; in USDA zone 8, plants function best when treated as herbaceous perennials and pruned back to within a few inches of the soil in winter; in zone 9 and milder, *A. virgata* can be used either as a shrub or limbed up into a small tree; in colder climates it functions as a 3 to 6 annual; plants typically grow 4 to 8 tall as a herbaceous perennials or dieback shrubs, but may reach 15 tall where fully hardy as woody shrubs or small trees.

**Cultural Requirements:** Plants grow best in full sun, but will tolerate partial shade; water needs are moderate to low and heat tolerance is high; plants tend to grow over vigorously on fertile sites; this species is at its best when treated as a herbaceous perennial or used as a summer annual in cooler climates.

**Pathological Problems:** None of a serious nature as yet; with more widespread use some may perhaps develop; spider mites and white flies sometimes infest other *Aloysia*.

**Ornamental Assets:** Almond Verbena is a very durable long blooming plant with highly fragrant flowers; it is one of our most reliable plants for floral fragrance in summer landscapes, whether used as an annual, herbaceous perennial or woody plant; attracts butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** Plants tend to be overly vigorous and quickly out grow smaller sites; also, while the flowers are attractive and highly fragrant, the overall form of the plant is rather rough and a bit unkempt; the foliage is scratchy to the touch, avoid pedestrian contact; attraction of bees can be a problem for those allergic to stings.

**Landscape Utilization:** Uses vary with region, in southern climes it can serve as patio tree for fragrance or a component of a shrub border; in areas where it is less reliably stem hardy, it might serve as a robust member of the perennial border or cottage garden; in colder climates, it could be grown as an annual in a fragrance or butterfly garden, or perhaps as a container plant to add perfume to the

patio.

**Other Comments:** This species has not long been encountered in our regional trade, but it is growing rapidly in popularity; regional cold tolerance is poorly defined and many folks underestimate its mature size; the genus name honors the 18<sup>th</sup> century princess of Parma, Maria Louisa, wife of the King of Spain; the specific epithet means twiggy.

**Native Habitat:** Argentina.

**Related Taxa:** *Aloysia* A.L. de Jussieu (*Xeroaloyisia*) are found from South America through the Southwestern U.S.; several species have potential for subtropical and tropical landscapes as well as other native species which are used extensively in arid Southwest U.S. landscapes.

***Aloysia citrodora*** C. Ortega ex C. Persoon

**Lemon Verbena**

(*Aloysia triphylla*, *Lippia citrodora*, *Lippia triphylla*, *Verbena triphylla*, *Zappania citrodora*)

C Another name for *A. citrodora* is Cedrón or Lemon-Scented Verbena; Lemon Verbena is a subtropical to tropical shrub grown for its lemon-scented foliage; the whorled to opposite lanceolate leaves are highly aromatic when crushed or bruised and *A. citrodora* is a favorite plant for scent gardens; plants make irregularly rounded, rather scraggly, shrubs reaching as much as 10N in height in tropical climates; shoots are hardy only in subtropical areas, but the plants will often return from the roots in USDA zones 9(8).

C Flowers are less impressive on this species than other *Aloysia* covered herein, forming axillary spikes or terminal panicles of tiny white to pale lavender flowers in summer to fall.

C This South American species is grown commercially for extracts for culinary flavoring, beverage flavoring, and the perfume industries; a long history in folklore and herbal remedies are also attributed to *A. citrodora*; dried leaves are popular in potpourri; the specific epithet means lemon-scented.

***Aloysia gratissima*** (J. Gillies & W.J. Hooker) N. Troncoso

**Whitebush**

(*Aloysia lycioides*, *Lippia lycioides*)

C Alternative common names for this species are numerous including Angel Favorita, Azmirillo, Beeblossom, Beebrush, Cedron, Cedrón Del Monte, Chaparro Blanco, Common Beebrush, Hierba De La Princesa, Jazminillo, Niñarupa, Organillo, Palo Amarillo, Privet Lippia, Reseda Del Campo, Romerillo, Troncoso, and Var Dulce; this semi-evergreen 6N to 9N tall irregularly upright to rounded much-branched shrub is native to Central, West, and South Texas, New Mexico, and Northern Mexico; it occurs naturally on dry slopes in more mesic areas and near arroyos in arid regions; leaves are linear, oblong-elliptic or lanceolate and may be as long as 1Q; branch tips may be almost spiny; twigs and underside of the leaves are covered in dense white hairs.

C Like several of its relatives, the vanilla-scented white flowers are the primary asset, occurring in loose spikes or racemes in spring; it is famous in the Trans-Pecos region as a source of nectar for bees, hence, the term “whitebush honey”; the specific epithet means pleasing or agreeable, in reference to the fragrant flowers.

C Plants are used in arid region landscapes for floral fragrance, but tend to be a bit irregular in form; probably useful in arid region USDA zones 7 to 10 based on its native range; plants tend to suffer in high humidity regions or sites with poorly drained soils.

***Aloysia wrightii*** (A. Gray) A. Heller ex L. Abrams

**Wright’s Beebrush**

(*Lippia wrightii*)

C *Aloysia wrightii* is also called Oreganillo, Whitebrush, Wright’s Bee Bush, or Wright’s Lippia; this species is found in similar locations as *A. gratissima*, but may be slightly more cold hardy; Wright’s

Beebrush is found throughout much of the arid Southwestern U.S. and Northern Mexico; the deciduous leaves on this 2Nto 4N(6N) tall twiggy shrub are wider than those of *A. garatissima* and are broadly ovate or nearly rounded in shape, but tend to be much shorter than those of *A. garatissima* and have toothed margins.

C Based on this species' native range, it is probably useful in USDA zones 6 to 10; poorly drained soils should be avoided; periodic pruning is needed to maintain canopy density and a pleasing form; the specific epithet honors the 19<sup>th</sup> century American botanist Charles Wright, famous for first collecting many Texas plants.

**References:** Jones and Sacamano, 2000; Phillips, 1995; Powell, 1998; Still, 1994; West, 2000.

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