

What If?- By Stan Southwick



If you've ever seen a "caption this" picture, then you will understand what this article is all about. The idea is to write a humorous caption to the selected picture. I would like to try something similar. I've often wondered how things would be if events took a different course. As you read the following "what if" questions, write down your first impressions and shoot them back to me. Your response may get published in a special mid-month edition of the SLAM!

Consultant of the Month

This month's consultant spotlight falls on Robert Hosea, principal at VTN Nevada. Of course, every great principal has a reliable right-hand-man. Lambdin Lauvao is Robert's go-to-guy and keeps our projects with VTN running smoothly. Both Robert and Lambdin are a pleasure to work with and they keep the lines of communication open and prompt. We enjoy working with them. Congratulations to the two of you.

- What if my electronic devices never crashed?
- What if I had smiled at everyone I met yesterday?
- What if I had given something to the homeless guy on the corner?
- What if I had eaten better last year?
- What if Hillary were president?
- What if shrubs were not trimmed into geometric shapes?
- What if bids were awarded to the second lowest bidder?
- What if fiber cereal really tasted good?
- What if I had a better topic to write about this month?

I'm looking forward to reading your response to these questions... or maybe even your own "what if" questions.

"Deep summer is when laziness finds respectability."
— Sam Keen

Favorite Flora:

Echinocactus polycephalus- Cottomtop Cactus- By Jon Marenfeld



Now that summer, and its relentless heat, are quickly approaching finding shade is paramount. If you're like me and have a small backyard finding a good, medium to small, shade tree can be difficult. The Texas Ebony, *Ebenopsis ebano*, may be a solution. A native to Texas and northern Mexico (Chihuahuan desert), the Texas Ebony is reminiscent of acacia and mesquite trees but has a lush appearance. It's one of the few vibrantly green desert trees. Young trees tend to have a somewhat irregular shape but become more regular and rounded as they age. Texas Ebony is evergreen, with irrigation, and grows slowly up to 20 feet wide and 25 feet high. The *Ebenopsis ebano* has thorny zig-zagging branches that are covered in medium to dark green glossy leaves. From late spring through autumn this tree will be covered in fragrant, cream/yellow, fluffy rod-shaped flowers (similar in form to a bottle brush). The flowers attract bees and butterflies. From fall through winter its large seed pods are visible and persistent. It's valued for its specimen qualities in gardens or patios or as a screen or barrier plant.

Fun facts: It's leaves fold up at night or in low light. In some parts of the US and Mexico it's been used in reclamation projects. The thick seedcoat or roasted seeds could be used as a coffee substitute. The heartwood is dark red to purplish-brown and the sapwood is yellowish. The wood is hard, close-grained, very durable, but brittle. It's been used for cabinet work, fence posts, wagons, etc.

The *Ebenopsis ebano* likes full sun and is highly tolerant of desert soils. Once established it's very drought tolerant. When young some recommend supplemental water to increase its growth rate. Some care should be exercised in placing this tree in your yard because it's thorny and drops seed pods. Plant it away from areas with foot traffic and pools. With its similarities to mesquites and acacias nearly any water-wise or xeriscape shrubs, groundcovers, or cacti can be paired with the Texas Ebony. Pair with barrel-like cacti such as Cottomtop Cactus (*Echinocactus polycephalus*), prickly pear cacti such as Engelmann's Prickly Pear (*Opuntia engelmannii*), Bigelow's Nolina (*Nolina bigelovii*), Apache Plume (*Fallugia paradoxa*), Damianita (*Chrysactinia mexicana*), or Lynn's Legacy Texas Ranger (*Leucophyllum langmaniae* 'Lynn's Legacy') for a water-wise, low care landscape.

Photo of the Month



Full Moon Sunrise
Owens Valley, CA
Matt Durham