

Fragrant ornamental tree for part-sun to sun: Mexican Plum, *Prunus mexicana*

Description: Mexican Plum (*Prunus mexicana*) is a deciduous tree, native to the eastern part of Texas to the western Cross Timbers. It usually reaches 8-15 feet tall, with a rounded crown; rare specimens have been measured as tall as 25 feet. Mexican Plum does not sucker, but grows singly, not forming thickets as do some of the other native North Texas plums. It has ovate leaves, up to 5 inches long and 2 inches wide with serrated margins and a wrinkled-looking surface texture.

Flowers and Fruit: In early spring before it leafs out, Mexican Plum is covered with fragrant white flowers that are up to one inch wide. Green fruits emerge in early summer and ripen to dark red or purple, with a whitish blush, late in the fall. The fruits are edible, although tart, and can be used to make jam.

Planting sites: Mexican Plum should be planted in dappled shade to part or full sun. It is adaptable to most soils, but like many other natives, it should not be planted where it will experience “wet feet”.

Watering Instructions: Like most Texas natives, Mexican Plum will need supplemental water during the first growing season; after it is established, it will thrive with existing rainfall. It is drought tolerant.

Comments: Mexican Plum is an outstanding addition as an ornamental tree to North Texas gardens. In addition to the very fragrant spring flowers and fall fruit, Mexican Plum is valued for its ornamental bark, which becomes dark with horizontal striations and peels off in patches as the tree matures. The fruit is eaten by birds as well as animals. For a spectacular spring display, consider planting Mexican Plum together with a Redbud tree – the two trees bloom at about the same time. Mexican Plum is a great alternative to crepe myrtle and, although smaller, is also an alternative to Bradford pear.

Look for the NICE! Plant of the Season signs and information sheets on your next visit to a participating North Texas nursery. Thank you for using native plants in your landscapes.

Trinity Forks Chapter, Native Plant Society of Texas Meetings are the 4th Thursday in Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Sep & Oct, TWU’s ACT building 6:30 pm, 2nd floor.



Photos courtesy of Marilyn Blanton (top) and Kathy Saucier (bottom)