



Arbutus texana Texas Madrone¹

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INTRODUCTION

This native North American evergreen tree has beautiful peeling bark and reaches a height of 40 feet but many trees are much smaller than this (Fig. 1). As the tree ages, the outer bark drops off to reveal the smooth, new bark which can range in color from white, apricot, tan, or dark red, and the mixture of colors between old and new bark is quite striking. The dark green leaves, with paler undersides, are joined in springtime with small, white flowers which have an interesting shape, almost like small lanterns. These blooms are followed by the production of orange or red berries which ripen in fall. Berries are very brightly colored and will attract attention in any landscape.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Arbutus texana*

Pronunciation: ar-BEW-tus teck-SAY-nuh

Common name(s): Texas Madrone

Family: *Ericaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 8 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; shade tree; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree

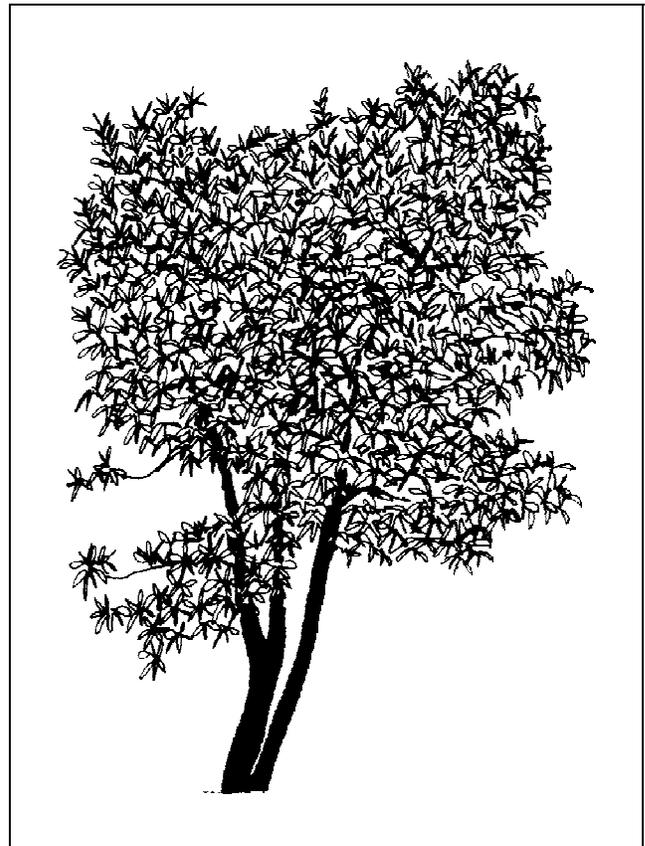


Figure 1. Mature Texas Madrone.

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-84, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 25 to 40 feet
Spread: 15 to 25 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: upright; vase shape
Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: medium
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: crenate; entire
Leaf shape: oblong; ovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristics: showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval; round
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit covering: fleshy
Fruit color: orange; red
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: green; gray
Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: loam; sand; alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Multiple trunks arise from the ground much like those of crape myrtle. Lower foliage and branches are often removed to show off this feature. Plant this tree to display the trunks near a patio, deck, walk or other area where people come close to the tree. A row of Texas Madrone planted on 15 to 20 foot centers can enlighten the entry way to an office park, condominium complex, or add character to a residential street.

Texas Madrone grows in full sun on any well-drained soil, acid or alkaline. It appears to be a very adaptable tree and should do well in a variety of landscape sites.

Propagation is by seed or micropropagation. Improved selections can probably be developed through micropropagation techniques.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.