



Cordia boissieri Wild-Olive¹

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INTRODUCTION

Wild-Olive is a native North American evergreen tree which reaches 20 feet in height with a 10 to 15-foot spread (Fig. 1). This small tree is very rarely found and is even reportedly close to extinction. The silvery green leaves have a velvety texture and the showy, white flowers appear year-round, if enough rainfall or irrigation is available. Otherwise, the three-inch-wide, trumpet-shaped, white blossoms with yellow throats will appear from late spring to early summer. The olive-like, white fruits which are produced have a sweet flesh relished by birds and other wildlife and, although edible to man, should not be eaten in quantities.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Cordia boissieri*

Pronunciation: KOR-dee-uh boy-see-AIR-ee

Common name(s): Wild-Olive, Anacahuita

Family: *Boraginaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (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; trainable as a standard; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree

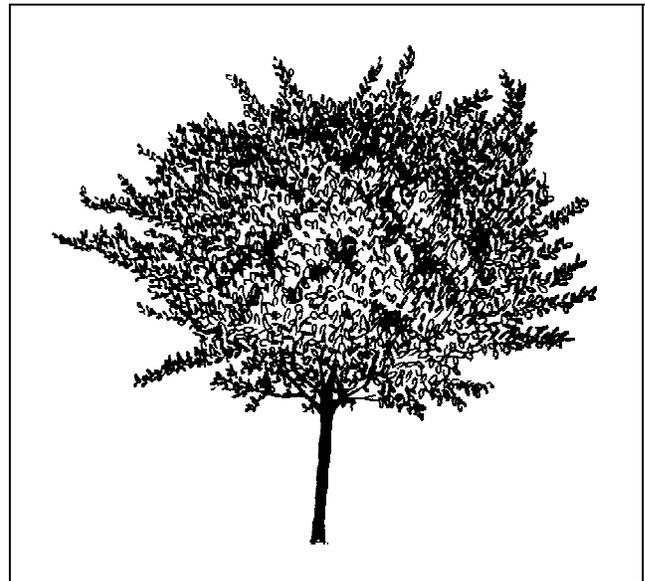


Figure 1. Middle-aged Wild-Olive.

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 20 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: round

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green; silver

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristics: spring flowering; summer flowering; very showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy

Fruit color: purple

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

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

Drought tolerance: high

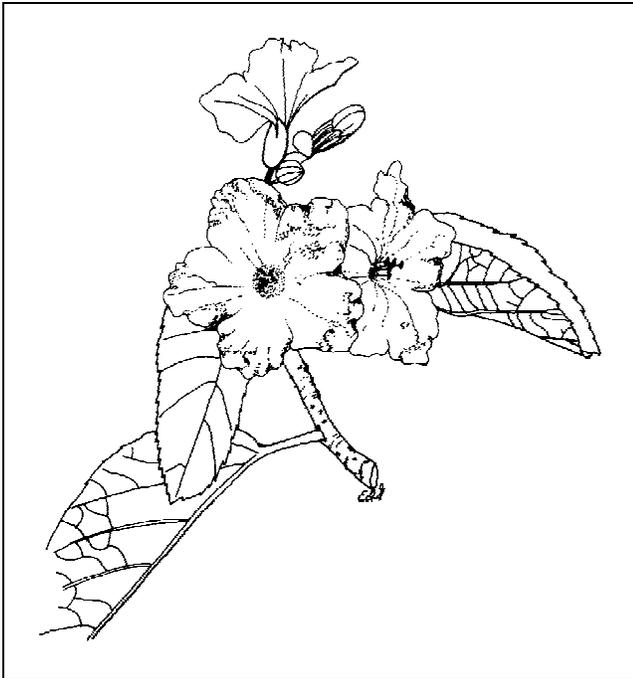


Figure 3. Foliage of Wild-Olive.

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: poor

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

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

Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT

This is a versatile plant adapted for use as a specimen tree or as an accent in a shrub border. Showy, year-round flowers make it suitable for placing in a lawn area as a free-standing specimen. It can be planted in an above-ground container and kept looking nice for a number of years when it is carefully maintained.

Wild-olive should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained soils and is highly drought-tolerant. Although hardy to about 20-degrees F., Wild-Olive will lose its leaves in a severe frost. This is the cold-hardy relative of *Cordia sebestena* which is very sensitive to the cold.

Propagation is by seeds and air-layering.

Pests

No pests are of major concern.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.