

## *Prunus mexicana* Mexican Plum<sup>1</sup>

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### INTRODUCTION

Growing 25 to 30 feet tall with a spread of 25 feet, Mexican Plum is a North American native tree which forms an irregular canopy composed of yellow/green, shiny leaves with fuzzy undersides and thorny branches (Fig. 1). In spring, the trees are smothered with fragrant, white blooms which are followed by purple/red, juicy fruits. These tart fruits can be used to make jams and jellies. The blooms help make Mexican Plum ideal for use as a specimen tree but it also fits in nicely in the naturalized landscape as an understory tree. The gray/black, ridged and furrowed bark is quite attractive, and the deciduous leaves turn a showy orange color in fall before dropping.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Prunus mexicana*

**Pronunciation:** PROO-nus meck-sih-KAY-nuh

**Common name(s):** Mexican Plum

**Family:** *Rosaceae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 6B through 8 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

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

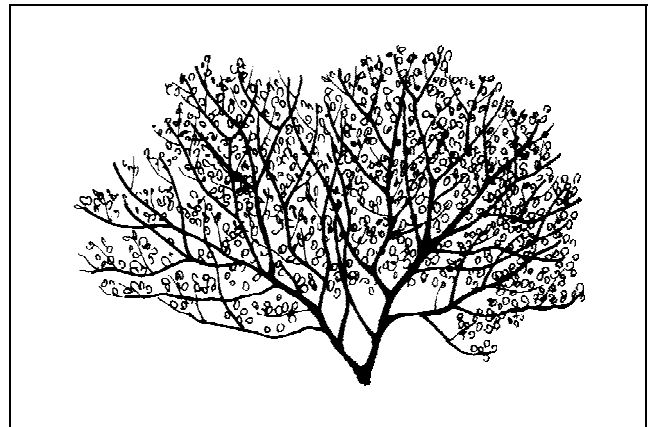


Figure 1. Middle-aged Mexican Plum.

### DESCRIPTION

**Height:** 25 to 30 feet

**Spread:** 20 to 25 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** round

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** serrate

**Leaf shape:** elliptic (oval); obovate; ovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

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**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Fall color:** orange

**Fall characteristic:** showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** pleasant fragrance; showy; spring flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches

**Fruit covering:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** purple; red

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; suited for human consumption; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; thorns are

present on the trunk or branches

**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown; gray

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun

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

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Other**

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

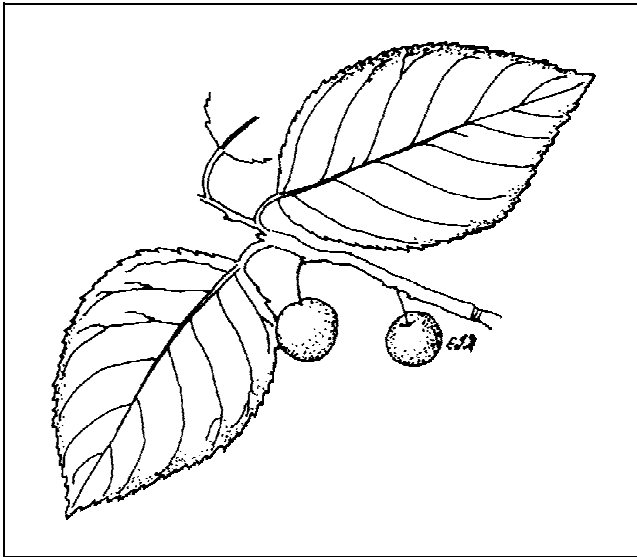
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

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

**Ozone sensitivity:** sensitive or moderately tolerant

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible

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



**Figure 3.** Foliage of Mexican Plum.

### **USE AND MANAGEMENT**

This small tree is well suited for residential landscapes. It might be best to locate the tree back from the edge of a patio, deck or walk since the fruits can be a little messy for a short period in the summer or early fall. When planted in the lawn or in a bed of low-growing ground cover, fruits drop unnoticed and are of no concern. The tree can be a 'show stopper' when it is in bloom. It makes a nice tree for planting near power lines due to its small size.

Mexican Plum should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained, rich soil but will tolerate almost any soil. It is quite drought-tolerant once established.

### **Pests or Diseases**

None of major concern.