

Common Hackberry

Celtis occidentalis

Secondary Names:

Northern Hackberry

Leaf Type: Deciduous

Texas Native: Yes No

Firewise: Yes No



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Tree Description:

A medium to large tree, becoming 60 to 100 feet or more tall and 2 feet or more in diameter, with a round or oval crown and limbs that often end in slender, drooping branches.

Range/Site Description:

Native only to the northern High Plains in the valley of the Canadian River, but planted widely as a landscape tree across north and northeast Texas, growing well on various soil types.

Leaf:

Alternate, simple, 2" to 4" long and 1.5" to 2" wide, ovate, long-pointed, with the base of the leaf lopsided and sharp teeth along the margin. Leaves are medium to light green above and paler below, turning light yellow in the fall, with prominent veins beneath.

Flower:

Male and female flowers borne in the leaf axils in April or May, inconspicuous, greenish-white in color.

Fruit:

A round, berry-like drupe, 0.25" to 0.5" in diameter, on a stalk longer than the leaf petioles, orange or red when ripe, but turning dark purple later in the fall, with a thin skin and yellowish flesh favored by many bird species.

Bark:

Gray and smooth at first, developing distinctive warty bumps and ridges over time; older bark is very rough with the warty ridges up to 0.75" thick.

Wood:

Rather soft, weak, and decays rapidly when exposed to the elements. It is used chiefly for fuel, and occasionally for lumber.

Similar Species:

Sugarberry (*Celtis laevigata* var. *laevigata*) has narrower leaves with smooth margins; netleaf hackberry (*C. laevigata* var. *reticulata*) has a wider West Texas distribution and smaller leaves with net-like veins underneath.

Interesting Facts:

Common hackberry is native to much of the eastern U.S. and was named "bois inconnu" -- the unknown tree -- by the earliest French explorers.