

Possumhaw

Ilex decidua

Secondary Names:

Deciduous Holly

Leaf Type: Deciduous

Texas Native: Yes No

Firewise: Yes No



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Tree Description:

A large woodland shrub or small, multi-trunked tree, to 20 feet tall and stems to 8" in diameter, with an irregular, open crown, and a horizontal branching habit.

Range/Site Description:

Fencerows, seasonally wet areas, and streamsides throughout Central and East Texas.

Leaf:

Simple, alternate, but sometimes hard to tell because the leaves are attached to short spur branchlets on the twigs. Leaves are 1.5" to 3" long and up to 1" wide, obovate, with a few dull teeth along the leaf margin, especially the outer half. Leaf color is dark green and somewhat shiny on top, light green beneath, and deciduous, which differs from the other common hollies.

Flower:

Male and female flowers borne on separate trees, each on short stalks, 0.1" to 0.2" long and wide, white, not showy.

Fruit:

A round, orange or red drupe, 0.25" in diameter, either single or 2 to 3 together, on a short stalk up to 0.5" long; borne in the fall and persisting through the dormant season.

Bark:

Smooth, tight, and gray, with many small spur branchlets.

Wood:

Sold commercially in the nursery trade as a landscape tree.

Similar Species:

Waxmyrtle (*Morella cerifera*) has evergreen leaves with sharp teeth along the margin; gum bumelia (*Sideroxylon lanuginosum*) has leaves with smooth margins and wooly undersides.

Interesting Facts:

Possumhaw gets the "haw" part of its name from the reddish fruits that can be mistaken for hawthorn fruits, and the "possum" part because they are a favorite food source for that peculiar animal.