

Red Mulberry

Morus rubra

Secondary Names:

Moral

Leaf Type: Deciduous

Texas Native: Yes No

Firewise: Yes No



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Tree Description:

A medium or large tree, to 50 feet tall, with a trunk up to 2 feet in diameter and a spreading crown.

Range/Site Description:

Occurs in East and Central Texas, west to the Devils River, preferring rich, moist soils of riverbottoms, often growing in the shade of larger trees.

Leaf:

Simple, alternate, 3" to 9" long and 2" to 5" wide, heart-shaped or rounded at the base, leaf margin sharp-toothed; some leaves are mitten-shaped or 3 to 5-lobed. Leaves are rough-hairy above and soft-hairy beneath, turning yellow in the fall.

Flower:

Male and female flowers borne on separate trees as cylindrical spikes; the male are 2" to 3" long and the female flowers just 1" long, appearing with the leaves in spring.

Fruit:

A round A composite fruit shaped like an elongated blackberry, 0.75" to 1" long; red, turning dark purple or black when ripe, and edible.

Bark:

Thin, dark grayish-brown, and peeling into long, narrow strips.

Wood:

Rather light, soft, not strong, light orange-yellow, and because it is durable in contact with the soil it is used for fence posts. Fruits are eaten by many species of birds.

Similar Species:

Texas mulberry (*Morus microphylla*) has very small leaves and occurs only in West Texas; white mulberry (*M. alba*) is the "fruitless" mulberry planted in many Texas landscapes; paper-mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*) in an introduced species with woolly, gray-green leaves.

Interesting Facts:

Like the honey mesquite in West Texas, red mulberry is one of the harbingers of spring in East Texas and it is said that the appearance of its leaves means that all danger of frost has passed.