

## Texas Mountain-Laurel

*Sophora secundiflora*

### Secondary Names:

Mescalbean

**Leaf Type:** Evergreen

**Texas Native:**  Yes  No

**Firewise:**  Yes  No



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### Tree Description:

A shrub or small tree to 20 feet tall and one or more trunks to 8" in diameter, with a compact, oval crown of glossy, dark green foliage.

### Range/Site Description:

Limestone soils in Central, South, and West Texas.

### Leaf:

Once-compound, alternate, 4" to 6" long, with 5 to 9 (sometimes more) oblong leaflets, each 1" to 2.5" long and 1" wide, margin smooth, tip rounded or slightly indented; evergreen, leathery, glossy on top, and paler below.

### Flower:

A dense cluster of purple, pea-like flowers appears with the new leaves in spring, with an aroma like grape-flavored Kool-Aid.

### Fruit:

A hard, brown pod, 2" to 5" long, constricted between the seeds; containing 3 to 8 hard, red seeds, each 0.5" or so long.

### Bark:

Dark brown to almost black, with thin scales developing into narrow, flat ridges with tight fissures in between.

### Wood:

Sold in nurseries as a landscape specimen.

### Similar Species:

American pistachio (*Pistacia mexicana*) has small leaflets that come to an abrupt point at the tip.

### Interesting Facts:

The large seeds are highly poisonous to humans. Despite this fact (or perhaps because of it), the seeds were used by Native Americans for ceremonial purposes, often in conjunction with the alcoholic drink, mescal -- giving it the common name "mescalbean." The species is unrelated to the true mountain-laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*).