

Osage Orange: *Maclura pomifera*
 Family: Moraceae
 By: Courtney Clark

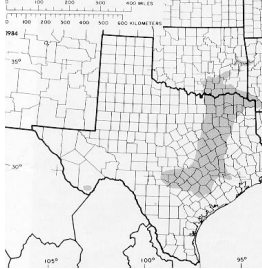


Life History:

- Flowers appear and open in April through June and are wind pollinated (2)
- Fruit ripens September through October (2)

Geographic Range:

- Natural: Red River drainage of Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas; and in the Blackland Prairies, Post Oak Savannas, and Chisos Mountains of Texas (2)



- commercial: All 48 conterminous states (2)

Characteristics:

Size: Can be considered a small tree or a large shrub and averages about 30 feet tall when mature (2)

Dioecious: male and female flowers are on separate trees (2,3)

Flowers:

- Male- green flowers arranged in axillary racemes placed on the end of a long peduncle (2,3)



- Female: Green flowers arranged in dense globose heads (2,3)



Fruit: When ripe is 3 to 6 inches in diameter and resembles a green, bumpy orange. In actuality it is an aggregate fruit composed of many drupelets each containing one seed. Humans cannot eat the fruit itself due to its toxicity, but they can eat the seeds (2,3,7)



Leaf: Deciduous, Lance-shaped, alternate arrangement. Upper surface of leaves is glossy. Produce milky white substance when the petiole is broken (6,3).

Stem: Branches contain short, approximately 1-inch thorns that are actually modified branches (2,6) Trunk is ash brown and/or orange where inner bark is exposed. The trunk usually appears twisted and very knotted in old specimens (3)



Insect and Fungal Pests:

- Cotton Root Rot (2,8)
- Can be attacked by various borers including the mulberry borer, the painted hickory borer, and the red-shouldered hickory borer (2)

Economic Importance:

- Used in during the expansion to the West as a natural hedge to keep livestock in. Worked extremely well due to the growth habit of the branches and the presence of thorns. (4,5,2)
- Used more recently as sturdy fence posts (4,5,2)
- The Osage Orange wood is still a sought after wood for making Bows for hunting (4,3,5)



Interesting Facts:

- The Osage Orange fruit, also called a hedge apple, produces a milky juice that insects really dislike. It is said that the fruit will rid your house of insects and prevent more from coming in if you leave it near an entryway (4,5)
- Common name comes from the Osage Native American tribe that used the wood for making bows combined with the "orange-peel" smell that the ripe fruit emits. (4,2)
- Other names include hedge, hedge apple, bodark and bowwood (2,6,3)
- Squirrels enjoy eating the seeds of the Osage Orange fruit and will expend much energy to extract them from the stringy, pulpy fruit (4)



Multiple Choice Question:

All of the following are characteristics of the Osage Orange except

- It is a Dioecious plant species
- It has opposite leaf arrangement
- The fruit is a large green aggregate fruit
- The branches have short thorns on them

Resources:

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- Pictures courtesy of Google Images