

Arbutus texana: Texas Madrone¹

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Introduction

This native North American evergreen tree has beautiful peeling bark and reaches a height of 40 feet but many trees are much smaller than this. As the tree ages, the outer bark drops off to reveal the smooth, new bark which can range in color from white, apricot, tan, or dark red, and the mixture of colors between old and new bark is quite striking. The dark green leaves, with paler undersides, are joined in springtime with small, white flowers which have an interesting shape, almost like small lanterns. These blooms are followed by the production of orange or red berries which ripen in fall. Berries are very brightly colored and will attract attention in any landscape.

General Information

Scientific name: *Arbutus texana*

Pronunciation: ar-BEW-tus teck-SAY-nuh

Common name(s): Texas Madrone

Family: *Ericaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 7A through 8B (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: tree lawn 3-4 feet wide; tree lawn 4-6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; deck or patio; street without sidewalk; shade; specimen; parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100-200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; highway median; container or planter

Availability: not native to North America

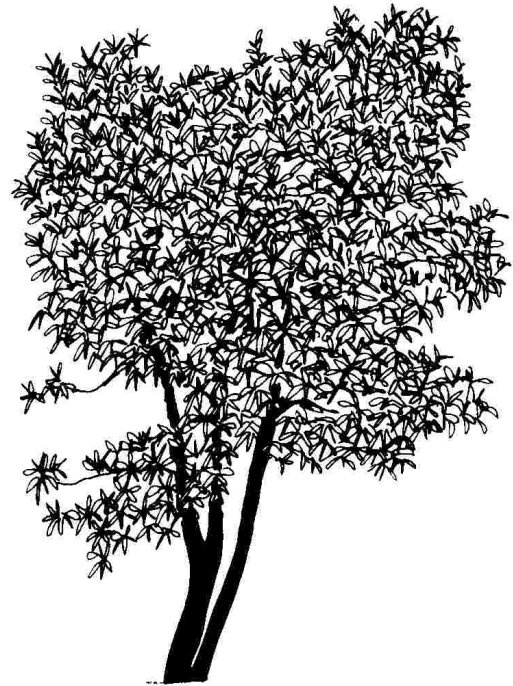


Figure 1. Middle-aged *Arbutus texana*: Texas Madrone

Description

Height: 25 to 40 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: vase, upright/erect

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Range

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** entire, crenate
- Leaf shape:** ovate, oblong
- Leaf venation:** pinnate
- Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen, broadleaf evergreen
- Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** no color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

Flower

- Flower color:** white/cream/gray
- Flower characteristics:** showy

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** round, oval
- Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch
- Fruit covering:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** orange, red
- Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** branches don't droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; thorns
- Pruning requirement:** little required
- Breakage:** resistant
- Current year twig color:** gray, green
- Current year twig thickness:** medium
- Wood specific gravity:** unknown

Culture

- Light requirement:** full sun
- Soil tolerances:** sand; loam; alkaline; well-drained
- Drought tolerance:** high
- Aerosol salt tolerance:** unknown

Other

- Roots:** not a problem
- Winter interest:** yes
- Outstanding tree:** yes
- Ozone sensitivity:** unknown
- Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown
- Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

Multiple trunks arise from the ground much like those of crape myrtle. Lower foliage and branches are often removed to show off this feature. Plant this tree to display the trunks near a patio, deck, walk or other area where people come close to the tree. A row of Texas Madrone planted on 15 to 20 foot centers can enlighten the entry way to an office park, condominium complex, or add character to a residential street.

Texas Madrone grows in full sun on any well-drained soil, acid or alkaline. It appears to be a very adaptable tree and should do well in a variety of landscape sites.

Propagation is by seed or micropropagation. Improved selections can probably be developed through micropropagation techniques.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.