**Prunus mexicana: Mexican Plum**

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**Introduction**

Growing 25 to 30 feet tall with a spread of 25 feet, Mexican Plum is a North American native tree which forms an irregular canopy composed of yellow/green, shiny leaves with fuzzy undersides and thorny branches. In spring, the trees are smothered with fragrant, white blooms which are followed by purple/red, juicy fruits. These tart fruits can be used to make jams and jellies. The blooms help make Mexican Plum ideal for use as a specimen tree but it also fits in nicely in the naturalized landscape as an understory tree. The gray/black, ridged and furrowed bark is quite attractive, and the deciduous leaves turn a showy orange color in fall before dropping.

**General Information**

- **Scientific name:** *Prunus mexicana*
- **Pronunciation:** PROO-nus meck-sih-KAY-nuh
- **Common name(s):** Mexican Plum
- **Family:** Rosaceae
- **USDA hardiness zones:** 6B through 8B (Fig. 2)
- **Origin:** native to North America
- **Invasive potential:** little invasive potential
- **Uses:** container or planter; deck or patio; specimen; highway median
- **Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

**Description**

- **Height:** 25 to 30 feet
- **Spread:** 20 to 25 feet
- **Crown uniformity:** irregular

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**Crown shape:** round  
**Crown density:** open  
**Growth rate:** slow  
**Texture:** medium

### Foliage

- **Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)  
- **Leaf type:** simple  
- **Leaf margin:** serrate  
- **Leaf shape:** ovate, elliptic (oval), obovate  
- **Leaf venation:** pinnate  
- **Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
- **Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches  
- **Leaf color:** green  
- **Fall color:** orange  
- **Fall characteristic:** showy

![Figure 3. Foliage](image)

### Flower

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

### Fruit

- **Fruit shape:** round  
- **Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches  
- **Fruit covering:** fleshy  
- **Fruit color:** red, purple  
- **Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

### Trunk and Branches

- **Trunk/bark/branches:** branches don't droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; no thorns  
- **Pruning requirement:** little required  
- **Breakage:** resistant  
- **Current year twig color:** gray, brown  
- **Current year twig thickness:** thin  
- **Wood specific gravity:** unknown

### Culture

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

### Other

- **Roots:** not a problem  
- **Winter interest:** no  
- **Outstanding tree:** no  
- **Ozone sensitivity:** sensitive  
- **Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible  
- **Pest resistance:** resistant to pests/diseases

### Use and Management

This small tree is well suited for residential landscapes. It might be best to locate the tree back from the edge of a patio, deck or walk since the fruits can be a little messy for a short period in the summer or early fall. When planted in the lawn or in a bed of low-growing ground cover, fruits drop unnoticed and are of no concern. The tree can be a ‘show stopper’ when it is in bloom. It makes a nice tree for planting near power lines due to its small size.

Mexican Plum should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained, rich soil but will tolerate almost any soil. It is quite drought-tolerant once established.

### Pests or Diseases

None of major concern.