

Cordia boissieri: Texas Olive¹

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Introduction

Texas olive is a native North American evergreen tree which reaches 20-feet in height with a 10- to 15-foot spread. This small tree is very rarely found and is even reportedly close to extinction. The silvery green leaves have a velvety texture and the showy, white flowers appear year-round, if enough rainfall or irrigation is available. Otherwise, the 3-inch-wide, trumpet-shaped, white blossoms with yellow throats will appear from late spring to early summer. The olive-like, white fruits that are produced have a sweet flesh relished by birds and other wildlife and, although edible to man, should not be eaten in quantities.



Figure 1. Full Form—*Cordia boissieri*: Texas olive

General Information

Scientific name: *Cordia boissieri*

Pronunciation: KOR-dee-uh boy-see-AIR-ee

Common name(s): Texas Olive, Wild Olive, Anacahuita

Family: *Boraginaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 9A through 11 (Figure 2)

Origin: native to the southern tip of Texas and northern Mexico

UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status: not assessed/incomplete assessment

Uses: sidewalk cutout (tree pit); parking lot island < 100 sq ft; parking lot island 100–200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn 3–4 feet wide; tree lawn 4–6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; container or planter; trained as a standard; specimen; highway median

Description

Height: 15 to 20 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: round

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Range

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen, evergreen

Leaf blade length: 5 inches

Leaf color: gray green on top, silvery underneath

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy



Figure 3. Leaf—*Cordia boissieri*: Texas olive

Flower

Flower color: white with a yellow throat

Flower characteristics: very showy; trumpet-shaped; emerges in clusters at branch tips

Flowering: late spring to early summer

Fruit

Fruit shape: round

Fruit length: ½ to 1 inch

Fruit covering: fleshy drupe

Fruit color: greenish-yellow

Fruit characteristics: attracts birds; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem



Figure 4. Flower—*Cordia boissieri*: Texas olive

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically multi-trunked; no thorns

Bark: gray or light brown, deeply fissured, and shredding

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown



Figure 5. Bark—*Cordia boissieri*: Texas olive
Credits: Gritta Hasing

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

This is a versatile plant adapted for use as a specimen tree or as an accent in a shrub border. Showy, year-round flowers make it suitable for placing in a lawn area as a free-standing specimen. It can be planted in an above-ground container and kept looking nice for a number of years when it is carefully maintained.

Texas olive should be grown in full sun or partial shade on well-drained soils and is highly drought-tolerant. Although hardy to about 20°F, Texas olive will lose its leaves in a severe frost. This is the cold-hardy relative of *Cordia sebestena* that is very sensitive to the cold.

Propagation is by seeds and air-layering.

Pests

No pests are of major concern.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

References

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