

Texas Wild Olive Tree

Article & photos by Roberta Allen, South Texas Border Chapter

New to the Rio Grande Valley, I set off to beautify my surroundings with trees and shrubs that are native to this area. After surveying a number of yards and plant nurseries, I decided on the addition of a Texas wild olive tree (*Cordia boissieri*), also known as a Mexican olive, Anacahuita, or Anacahuite. The genus name, *Cordia*, is named after Valerius Cordus, a German botanist, while the species name, *boissieri*, is dedicated to the French botanist Boissier.

I concluded this would be the perfect specimen for the front yard so all the passersby could marvel at its beauty. This particular plant can either be an ornamental shrub if pruned to be so or it can be developed into a tree which can grow up to 30 feet tall.



Well pruned Texas wild olive specimen

In frost free areas, the tree may remain evergreen, making it a plant that has color and leaves all year long. The leaves are a dark gray/green in nature and covered in numerous trichomes (short hairs). The large trumpet shaped two inch wide flowers are showy white with a bright yellow center, having five stamens.



Showy blooms and dark leaves of Texas wild olive

The fruit that is produced can appear white, purple, or reddish brown and are approximately one inch in size.

The olives are edible for the wildlife, but are not recommended for human consumption in large quantities. In Mexico, the fruit is often made into jelly or used to relieve colds and coughs.

The leaves can also be used to treat bronchial and rheumatism problems. The wood can be used to create many different everyday objects used throughout a personal household. As the plant matures the bark transforms and looks weathered.



I see the flowers most every month, but a lot of flowers can be seen from late spring to early summer. Many different types of wildlife including birds such as hummingbirds, as well as butterflies and other pollinators enjoy the large white flowers which provide nectar.

This drought tolerant plant is native only in the south part of Texas, as well as Mexico. It cannot tolerate the cold weather. While the plant thrives in the Texas heat the foliage will burn if the temperature drops to the low 20 degrees or below Farenheit.

Texas wild olive trees are slow growing and do best in full sun to partial shade.

This plant is considered to be one that can cause a mess due to the flowers and fruit dropping to the ground on a continuous basis. It is recommended that olive trees be planted away from sidewalks and driveways to avoid the mess and still provide habitat in your yard.