

SUGGESTED ORNAMENTAL DROUGHT-HARDY
TREE AND SHRUB SPECIES
FOR THE SOUTHERN
LLANO ESTACADO

LARGE SHADE TREES

Shade trees are important in the land of the relentless summer sun. On an average city lot, however, people often plant too many with the result much later of deep dark shade with soil full of roots and unable to provide nutrients for more colorful shorter plants. A good plan would be to plant one on the west side of the front and back yards, so that sun can reach part of the garden. Surprisingly, a number of shade trees can survive on once every three-week watering after the first year of establishment.

BIGTOOTH MAPLE – *Acer grandidentatum* -- Yes, there is a maple that can live in alkaline west Texas soils! Many years the tree will produce gold to red foliage in the fall, except when the first freeze is below 20 degrees F. By the age of ten, the bigtooth maple will bloom as it leafs out, with sweet smelling greenish-yellow catkins, followed by the paired winged samaras that never create a mess. In west Texas bigtooth maple will reach 30 feet and a spread of 20 feet.

BUMELIA – *Bumelia lanuginosa* -- In the draws of west Texas and throughout the hill country, a tree quite similar in appearance to live oak (except that is deciduous) is commonly found. In most places it will attain 30 feet in height, and a spread of 20 feet. The dark green leaves are two inches long and an inch across. The underside of the leaves is whitish with woolly hair. The newest growth starts as if it were a spine, but in the second year lengthens. In June the strangely-scented greenish-white flowers disturb the olfactory senses for a week or two. In September the tree becomes covered with small black-purple berries that birds adore. Humans can eat a dozen or so, but if more are ingested, diarrhea is the result.

HACKBERRY – *Celtis laevigata*, *C. reticulata* – *Reticulata* is native from Stanton west, while *laevigata* is common to the east. Both trees can reach 40 or more feet tall with a 50 foot spread. The leaves are three inches long and somewhat rough to the touch. Psyllid insects always leave tiny galls on the leaves. Non-descript blooms in May, followed by berries that ripen in the fall, hang on through the winter. Robins and bluebirds, as well as mockingbirds, gorge on the berries, and sometimes get drunk on the fermented berries. It grows quickly. Unfortunately, it has shallow roots, so it should not be planted near sidewalks and patios, so as to prevent damage to these hardscapes.

GOLDEN RAIN TREE – *Koelreuteria paniculata* – This compound-leafed tree grows to 30 feet tall with a 20 foot spread. The leaves are a dark green, and sometimes in the fall have red highlights. Strange, papery, reddish fruits follow small yellowish spires of blossoms in May in late July. These fruits hang on for at least two months, giving a long period of attractive appearance. The structure is open and airy.

BUR OAK – *Quercus macrocarpa* – This superb oak grows to 50 feet, and 30 feet wide. Its large lobed deciduous leaves are dark green and leathery. In the fall, it often turns a beautiful golden color. The acorns are huge, with hairy caps. The western-most wild population is at the head of the river ranch on the headwaters of the South Concho River near Christoval, Texas. All oaks grow three feet a year, despite folktales to the contrary. Acorns are formed by the tenth year of its existence.

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CHINKAPIN OAK – *Quercus muhlenbergii* – Another wonderful shade tree oak, chinkapin oak also reaches 50 feet in height, with a thirty foot spread. The 4-inch long and three inch wide leaves are dark green, leathery, and unlobed. Native to the Davis and Guadalupe Mountains, it handles our heat and alkali soils handily.

TEXAS RED OAK – *Quercus texana* (*Q. buckleyii* in modern texts) – A much better red oak for west Texas than Shumard red oak, Texas red oak commonly reaches 30 feet, with a 20 foot spread. In the fall, after the first frost, the toothed and lobed leaves turn a glorious burgundy. This tree is native all over the hill country, and is found as close as the Callahan Divide southwest of Abilene. In some years, acorn drop is overwhelming, and must be swept off of patios and sidewalks for several weeks.

ESCARPMENT LIVE OAK – *Quercus fusiformis* – Much more cold-tolerant than Virginia Live Oak, this oak is native as close as a few miles east of Sterling City. It will attain a 40 foot height and a 30 foot spread. In some years, acorn drop can be a problem. The leaves do not have any lobes, and only rarely do they have teeth. Unlike the above-mentioned oaks, it is evergreen, except for a two-week period the first of April – but new leaves appear as the old ones fall.

CHINESE PISTACHE – *Pistache chinensis* – Without a doubt, this is the best fall foliage tree for west Texas. With compound leaves, the tree grows to 45 feet tall with a 30-foot spread. In March the weird male and female blossoms appear on separate trees, and by August the clusters of tiny nuts adorn the outside edge of the tree. These clusters are first a brilliant red, and if the birds leave any nuts by October, many turn a dark blue. In fall the foliage is scarlet, orange, and yellow.

SOAPBERRY -- *Sapindus drummondii* – Native to the draws and sandhills of west Texas, as well as to the east, soapberry provides a bright golden fall foliage. Growing to 40 feet tall with a 20 foot spread, it unfortunately sends out suckers, so unmaintained one tree will become dozens. In May white sprays of blossoms attract butterflies and insect-eating birds, and in October the berries become a translucent gold revealing a dark pit inside. The berries, agitated in water, create plentiful suds, so along with the roots of yucca, provided excellent cleaning agents for the Indians.

AMERICAN ELM – *Ulmus americana* – Unfortunately, with the introduction of the elm leaf beetle that severely damages the appearance of the commonly used Siberian elm, this excellent elm has fallen out of favor because of unwarranted fears of infestation. Native as close as the Callahan Divide south of Sweetwater, this tree is actually a wonderfully hardy and drought-resistant tree. It can reach 60 feet tall with a 30 foot spread. The leaves turn yellow-gold in the fall.

CEDAR ELM – *Ulmus crassifolia* – Another native Texas elm, this small-leaved and rough-leaved tree is another excellent choice for the Llano Estacado landscape. It will reach 50 feet tall with a 30-foot spread. Its leaves also turn yellow-gold in the fall. It is native from Abilene and Mason east.

LACEBARK ELM – *Ulmus parvifolia* – The true Chinese Elm, lacebark elm has proved its worth in Midland at the Dennis the Menace park. It grows 4 feet a year, up to 50 feet tall and a 40 foot spread. As with the other elms, a golden fall foliage often occurs.

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EVERGREEN TREES OF VARYING SIZE

Evergreen trees create a sense of dwelling in the mountains of the southwest. Looking out a window at pines transports a person to cooler climes and memories of enjoyable summer vacations. The junipers and pinyons normally reach only 25 feet tall with a 15 foot spread, while Arizona cypress reaches 35 feet tall and a 20 foot spread. Pines are the tallest trees in Midland, often reaching 40 and 50 feet tall with a 25 foot spread. All are quite drought hardy, and most can survive on rainfall except in the driest of years.

ARIZONA CYPRESS –*Cupressus arizonica* – With tightly whorled needles that create a frond-like appearance, this bluish green tree is commonly used on the highways and in graveyards. Its bark is a wonderful red color, with little curly pieces continually rolling up along the trunk. It gets dozens of one-inch balls as fruits. In the Panhandle, a bacterial disease has damaged some plantings, but as of 2003 no sign of the disease has reached the southern Llano Estacado.

JUNIPER (CEDAR) *Juniperus asheii*, *J. deppeana*, *J. flaccida*, *J. monosperma*, *J. pinchottii*, *J. utahensis*, *J. virginiana* – Junipers are mostly used in the shrub and ground cover forms, but the larger species deserve a place in the home landscape as well. Of the species listed above, several forms are available – *flaccida* has weeping foliage and branches, *monosperma* grows straight and upright, *virginiana* has a pyramidal form, while *pinchottii* and *asheii* are often almost as wide as they are tall with a multi-trunked appearance. *Deppeana*, or alligator juniper, grows the tallest, eventually reaching a 40 foot height. Its bark is scaly, like that of an alligator. All produce blue berries, except *pinchottii*, which has red berries. Robins and bluebirds will spend months harvesting the berries, if they outnumber the mockingbirds defending the tree.

PINYON -- *Pinus cembroides*, *P. monophylla*, *P. remota* – The three species of pinyon are superb small pine trees. Their short needles, attractive cones, and dense growth are emblematic of the desert southwest. Normally only growing to 30 feet at best, with a 20 foot spread, pinyons invoke the foothills of the desert island mountains.

PINES – *Pinus chihuahuensis*, *Pinus eldarica*, *P. pinea*, *P. strobiformis* – These pines will reach at least 40 feet, if not taller. *Eldarica*, or Afghan pine, is the fastest growing, reaching 20 feet in ten years. *Chihuahuensis* is rarely used in w. Texas, but as it grows in southern Arizona and northern Mexico, it is well adapted to our conditions. *Pinea*, or Italian Stone Pine, has reached 60 feet tall in Midland, with a 30 foot spread. *Strobiformis*, or southwestern white pine, is the most openly formed of these species. The often sold Slash Pine performs poorly in the alkaline soils of our region and should not be planted.

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SMALLER ORNAMENTAL TREES

Accent trees provide color and interesting shapes to the landscape. Ornamental trees are under-utilized design elements. All of the following, after the first two years of weekly watering, will thrive on once every three weeks watering! All produce fruiting bodies that will eventually fall to the ground, necessitating a short period of minor maintenance.

WRIGHT'S ACACIA – *Acacia wrightii* -- Acacias are common arid-land trees and shrubs. Their spreading crowns above an angular branch structure present an image of African savannahs. Wright's Acacia is the most cold-hardy acacia. It will reach a height of 20 feet with a crown spread of 15 feet. Fuzzy white blossoms of 2 inch spikes in May are sweet smelling and attract butterflies. The tiny compound leaves are similar to mesquite. A small number of three inch beans follow, and hang on past frost. As it is deciduous, the structure of the plant gives added interest to the winter landscape. The small thorns on new growth are not a problem.

MEXICAN REDBUD – *Cercis mexicana* -- Redbuds are familiar to almost everyone. Mexican Redbud is native to western Texas, so it is the best-adapted form for landscapes from Abilene and San Angelo west. Its leaves are small, very shiny, and slightly crinkled. Before it leafs out, the blooms in March and April are a more intense and darker shade than eastern varieties. Of added interest are the beans, which are also of a dark red color. The variety is less likely to suffer bore damage than the eastern varieties. It will reach the height of 20 feet with a spread of 15 feet, and often has a multi-trunk form, so it can serve as a windbreak and screen in the landscape.

DESERT WILLOW – *Chilopsis linearis* – Not a true willow, Desert Willow adds a wonderful weeping or Asian form to the landscape. Narrow leaves during the growing season are often sprinkled with orchid-like flowers. Several color varieties have been developed; "Buddy" is the deepest red, and there is a white variety as well. The species blooms are normally pink. The blooms are followed by long narrow beans, which hang on in the winter for added interest. It will reach 25 feet in height with a 15 foot spread, and will grow up to five feet a year when young. It is best pruned into a three or four trunked tree.

TEXAS HAWTHORNE – *Crataegus marshalli* – True Hawthornes are one of the most glorious of small ornamental trees. In spring, as it leafs out, the tree is completely covered with small white rose blossoms. Hundreds of small red berries will ripen in September, liberally adorning the tree. The tree will reach 20 feet with a 15-foot spread. The leaves turn yellow in the fall, creating a third season of attractive interest. Small thorns on new growth are not a problem. These trees deserve a much wider use!

GOLDEN BALL LEAD TREE – *Leucana retusa* – Another tree with small compound leaves that reminds people of mesquites, but without thorns! Golden spheres of bloom appear in large numbers in April and May, and then occasionally sprinkle the tree the rest of the growing season. The three-inch beans fall to the ground in fall and early winter. The tree will grow to 15 feet, with a 10-foot spread. It can be pruned to a single trunk, but is best with several main upright trunks.

RETAMA – *Parkinsonia aculeata* – The bright chartreuse bark of this tree creates a startling accent to the landscape. It will retain a single-trunk form until the below zero freezes that occur once every twenty years kill it to the ground, whereupon it regrows with a multi-trunk form. Six-inch long compound leaves with tiny leaflets create a fascinating texture. Bright yellow pea flowers brighten the plant throughout the growing season, followed by dark brown 3 inch and slender beans. It can reach 20 feet in height, with a 10 foot spread. The tree promotes a tropical or Mexican hint to the landscape.

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MESQUITE – *Prosopis juliflora* var. *glandulosa* – With infrequent waterings and judicious pruning our native shrub can become a very attractive tree, such as the specimen at the Midland Center. The bright chartreuse leaves of the spring are a delight. The two-inch long yellow catkin-like blossoms attract many butterflies in April, followed by sweet-tasting reddish beans that ripen in early June. Specimens have grown to 25 feet tall in Midland, with a canopy spreading as far. To have a mesquite in one's yard is to proclaim that you are proud of living on the Llano Estacado.

SCREWBEAN MESQUITE – *Prosopis pubescens* – Screwbean is found along the Rio Grande River and Pecos River in the wild. The unique whorled beans give it its name, as well as a surprising detail to the early winter landscape while the beans remain on the tree. It grows more upright than its more familiar cousin, but otherwise it is almost identical. To have this tree in one's landscape is a statement of one's sophisticated knowledge of the western Texas landscape. The Spanish name is Tornillo, a name given to a number of creeks and drainages in the southwestern United States.

SMALL OAKS -- *Quercus grisea*, *Q. lacey*, *Q. vaseyana*, *Q. turbinella* – Small deciduous oaks have never been utilized in the home landscape, but deserve a place. All have interesting leaves that add detail to the yard. *Grisea* has gray green leaves, *lacey* has blue green leaves, *vaseyana* has wavy leaves and *turbinella* has tiny jagged leaves. All will only grow to 10 to 15 feet tall with a corresponding spread. *Grisea* and *vaseyana* are multi-trunked forms, while *lacey* and *turbinella* will form small lollipop standards that provide a striking addition to the landscape.

FLAMELEAF SUMAC – *Rhus lanceolata* – For those with larger yards, flameleaf sumac provides a dashing statement of fall color. The tree reaches 20 feet tall. It needs plenty of room, for it will send out suckers for twenty feet. When a person travels throughout central Texas in October and November, the traveler's eye is continually drawn to the bright splash of the red and orange fall foliage. The plant produces a tight clump of white blossoms, followed by red berries, much loved by bluebirds, robins, and mockingbirds, and by knowledgeable Texans that have learned to brew a delicious lemonade-tasting tea. It has dark green compound leaves a foot long that add a tropical lushness to the landscape.

EVE'S NECKLACE – *Sophora affinis* – Along with its cousin Japanese *Sophora*, this is another plant that presents an oriental weeping form to the landscape. Both normally attain a 20 foot height with a 15 foot spread. Often multi-trunked, both species have pinkish white pea-blossoms that bloom in late April. As the summer progresses, the seedpods form, and look like short strands of black beads strung along a string. The fruit will hang on all winter, for additional interest and detail.

VITEX – *Vitex agnus-castus* – By far a much better butterfly attractant than butterfly-bush (*Buddleja*) *Vitex* has been in the west Texas landscape palette since settlement. From Big Spring east, *Vitex* has escaped cultivation to ornament water drainages throughout the hill country. Its two-inch long purple spikes have their greatest showing in late June and early July, but blossoms will appear through out the growing season. It usually reaches 20 feet in height, with a multi-trunk form giving in a 20 foot spread. The spires of seeds hang on all winter, attracting wintering species of sparrows and other birds needing a quick energy boost. The compound leaves are palmate, meaning each appears to have a human hand shape. The plant arrived in the Western Hemisphere via Chinese settlers who used the seeds as a sedative, and the spicy-smelling leaves in their food.

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UNDER-UTILIZED LARGE EVERGREEN SHRUBS

Many people use evergreen shrubs for hedges, forcing species that can reach 15 feet in height to be only 3 or 4 feet tall. Evergreen shrubs, allowed to reach their potential height, can create a unique regal statement to a landscape, as well as promoting a sense of a private retreat within the design. The common hedge shrubs, ligustrum, eleagnus, pyracantha, nandina, and euonymus, after a year's establishment, can also be drought tolerant shrubs, surviving on once every three weeks' watering like the following species.

SILKTASSEL – *Garrya ovata*, *Garrya wrightii* – These shrubs reach 10 feet by 5 feet. Both have evergreen leaves two inches long and an inch across. *Ovata*'s leaves are a darker green, while *wrightii*'s leaves are lime green. Both have a spray of white blossoms in May, followed by an umbel of hard black nut-like fruits in August. Both species are uncommon in the horticultural trade, but deserve a chance in the home landscape. Both have a dense form. *Ovata* is from central Texas, while *wrightii* grows from the Franklin Mountains at El Paso and on west.

EVERGREEN SUMAC – *Rhus virens* – Evergreen sumac has dark green leaves year around, except in winters with below zero temperatures, when they turn a deep reddish-bronze. In the fall the plant is covered with spires of sweet-smelling and tiny white blossoms followed by bright red berries that bring berry-eating birds in for a feast. Like its cousin, the flame-leaf sumac, it also produces a delightful beverage that can be imbibed hot or cold. The shrub grows to 12 feet tall with an equal spread as a result of its multi-trunked form. In shade it will become an open shrub, while in the bright sun it is a dense wall.

MOUNTAIN LAUREL – *Sophora secundiflora*, *S. gypsophila* – With bright green leaves, and purple blossoms in April and silver seedpods year around, mountain laurel is a gem in the landscape. The blossoms impart a sweet grape smell throughout the yard. Inside the seedpods are bright red beans, which are poisonous if broken and small pieces ingested. Kids in earlier times learned that if the seeds are rubbed on concrete they retain heat if handed to someone else. The plant usually attains 12 feet tall and 8 feet across. Like the evergreen sumac, the form changes from the shade to bright sunny areas. *Gypsophila* (Silver Peso) is a silver-leafed species with an adult height of 8 feet.

ROSEWOOD – *Vauquelinia californica*, *Vauquelinia angustifolia*, *Vauquelinia maculata* – These three species are superb large ornamental shrubs. Each has narrow evergreen leaves with serrated edges, a multi-trunk form, and clusters of white blossoms. On older plants the bark is flushed with pink to red highlights. The plants reach 15 feet in height with a corresponding spread. *Californica* has two inch long leaves and an inch across, *maculata* has three inch long leaves and an inch across, while *angustifolia* has 5 inch long leaves and a half-inch across.

CHINESE PHOTINIA – *Photinia serrulata* – A long-used ornamental plant in central and west Texas, Chinese photinia is often seen thriving beside a long-abandoned farmhouse in rural landscapes, as well in the older parts of all regional towns. With big glossy dark green leaves, white blossoms in April, and purple berries in late fall, this striking 20 foot tall and 10 foot across shrub deserves to be brought back into common usage. The new growth often has a coppery-tinge, and in severe winters the leaves will again have bronze highlights.

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SMALLER SHRUBS, EVERGREEN AND DECIDUOUS

Over the years, west Texans have discovered more varieties of long-used small shrubs that are beautiful as well as drought-hardy. Other species have recently been introduced and are as of yet, not commonly used. All of the following thrive on once every three-week waterings, adding a dazzling array to the color palette of the landscape.

AGARITA – *Berberis hematocarpa*, *B. swasey*, *B. trifoliata* – Also known as agrito and algerita, this holly like shrub with sharp-pointed evergreen leaves, yellow blossoms, and bright red fruit is a much-loved plant by connoisseurs of tart jellies. The yellow blossoms of late March are intensely sweet smelling and the berries follow in late May. *Trifoliata* is the most common species, and its leaves are blue-green. The green-leaved *hematocarpa* is the tallest, to 8 feet with an equal spread, but the others usually only reach 5-6 feet tall and across. *Swasey* has five leaflets, while *hematocarpa* has seven, and both are rare in the horticultural trade but should increase in availability.

ANTIQUER ROSES – *Rosa* sp. – Through the efforts of the Antique Rose Emporium in Brenham Texas, dozens of species of hardy roses are now available to the homeowner. Some of the best performers in west Texas have been Old Blush, Seven Sisters, Ballerina, Fortunata, and Marie Pavie. Antique roses do not get the disease problems as modern roses, and many do not suffer from our alkaline soils. Most also have a sweet and obvious odor, unlike many of the modern hybrids that have no smell at all. Antique roses deserve a chance!

BIRD OF PARADISE – *Caesalpinia gillesii*, *Caesalpinia mexicana*, *Caesalpinia pulcherrima* – *Gillesii* has been used since the early days of settlement. Normally 5-7 feet tall with a 4 foot spread, the lacy compound foliage (with a slightly unpleasant odor), the species has even escaped cultivation to brighten up pastures. The cluster of inch wide yellow blossoms in May have 3-inch long red stamens. Tan pods pop loudly on the hottest days, sending seeds flying as the pod quickly curls into two tight corkscrews. Denigrated by citizens with racist and social status conscious attitudes, it remains a favorite for many. *Mexicana* has yellow blossoms without long stamens during most of the growing seasons, attains a ten-foot height, with dark green compound leaves with almost circular leaflets. *Pulcherrima* is also known as the Pride of Barbados, and has intense orange and red blossoms that attract attention clear down the street. All are deciduous, and will die back in severe winters. After pruning to live wood, they regain their height quickly. *Pulcherrima* may need extra mulch in severe winters to ensure survival.

BEAUTYBERRY – *Callicarpa americana* – Long used in west Texas landscapes in dappled shade conditions, and known to old-timers as French Mulberry, beautyberry reveals intense clusters of purple berries in September. A white-berried form is also available. The leaves are deciduous, three inches long and two inches across.

CARYOPTERIS – *Caryopteris incana*, *C. mastcanthus* – Introduced to west Texas in the late 1990's, this small deciduous shrub has performed well in dappled shade conditions. From June until frost, bluish to purplish blossoms attract butterflies. Four feet tall at best, it is an excellent choice to add another level to a series of plants at different heights. "Dark Knight" has been the best performer. Small leaves and a multi-branched form create a rounded mound.

FALL BUTTERFLY BUSH – *Eupatorium wrightii* – This almost unknown shrub is covered with sweet smelling white blossoms in late October and through most of November. It continues to bloom past the first frost and as a result will bring every butterfly within miles for a final feast on

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warm Indian-summer days. It is usually four feet tall by four feet across, but old specimens can attain a 6-foot height. The deciduous leaves are an attractive bright green against reddish twigs.

POSSUMHAW – *Ilex decidua* – Possumhaw reaches 12 feet tall and 8 feet across. Unlike its close relative yaupon holly, possumhaw does not mind the alkaline soils of west Texas and does not get chlorotic (yellowish leaves with green veins.) Both male and female plants have to be planted to have the incredible winter showing of berries – a leafless tree with thousands of tiny bright red berries. The tiny blooms of summer are unnoticeable. The leaves are 2 inches long and an inch across. Its multi-trunked form provides great screening.

WINTER JASMINE – *Jasminum nudiflorum* – In the old part of every town of west Texas, winter jasmine announces its presence in January and February with thousands of yellow blossoms on its green twigs. Usually only 3-4 feet tall, ancient specimens have attained 6 or 7 feet in height when allowed to lean against a fence. Now uncommon in the horticultural trade, it deserves to become a major part of the newer landscapes in our region. All summer it has small green leaves which hang on until just before its winter blooming period.

CREOSOTE BUSH – *Larrea divaricata* – This 6-foot tall evergreen multi-trunked shrub is “the smell of rain in the desert regions of the American southwest.” The resinous odor is not for everyone, but long-time desert dwellers become ecstatic when its odors fill the air before a thunderstorm. It has tiny dark-green leaves, small yellow blossoms and round fuzzy white seedpods. It is one of the most drought-hardy plants that can be found – surviving over two years without a drop of rain in Death Valley. If it is utilized in the landscape on the Llano Estacado, it should be planted in a raised bed to provide adequate drainage – otherwise in wet years it will drown!

TEXAS SAGE – *Leucophyllum frutescens*, *L. minus*, *L. pruinosa*, *L. candidum*, *L. laevigatum*, *L. langmaniae*, *L. zygophyllum* – *Frutescens* is the species that has been used in west Texas for decades. Also known as barometer bush and cenizo, this plant has been used by every town in west Texas this silver-leaved shrub for community plantings. Private citizens relish its habit of blooming during every rainy or humid spell from June until frost. The other species have entered the horticultural trade beginning in the early 1990’s and have proven their worth. *Laevigatum* has small green leaves, unlike the other species. *Pruinosa* has deep purple blossoms with white centers. All can survive on rainfall alone, even in the worst of droughts.

WINTER HONEYSUCKLE – *Lonicera fragrantissima* – In the old parts of every town in west Texas, this shrub sends its vanilla scent into the air every January to March. Almost forgotten, it deserves to be returned to the landscape palette. Reaching 9 feet in height and 6 feet across, the white blossoms begin blooming before the leaves appear, but continue to bloom until it finishes leafing out. The leaves are a bright lime green slowly becoming darker. After a decade, it will send up suckers at the base of the plant.

PINK AND WHITE BOTTLEBRUSH – *Mimosa dysocarpa* – This is NOT an Australian bottlebrush, which will not survive our winters, but a native “catclaw” that is so striking that it deserves use along hot concrete fences and other areas where people do not walk. Every twig is covered with tiny thorns! Two-inch pink blossoms fade to white, and the shrub will often have a hundred such blossoms. The shrub will attain a height of 6 feet, and its multi-trunked form will spread out several feet. In most years, some or all of it will freeze back, so it must be cut back.

ARROYO SWEETWOOD – *Myrospermum sousanum* – This species is native to Mexico, but a small population was found near Uvalde in the early 1990’s. Steve Lewis, a superb plantsman in

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Mertzon, Texas collected seeds, grew many plants out and gave it to people all over the state. This deciduous shrub will reach 10 feet tall with a 6-foot spread, with dark green compound leaves. Its blooms are white and have a most incredible cinnamon-toast smell. In severe winters it will die back, so occasionally some spring pruning must be done. This plant will only grow in popularity as it becomes better known.

MEXICAN OREGANO – *Poliomintha longiflora*, *P. maderensis* – This evergreen shrub, four feet tall and four feet across, is covered with pink blossoms fading to white from May until frost. The tubular form of the blossoms attracts hummingbirds by the score. The tiny dark green leaves are commonly sold in grocery stores to be used in the same way as oregano. The plant is becoming more common in the horticultural industry, and is growing in popularity.

POMEGRANATE – *Punica granatum* – Pomegranate has been utilized in west Texas since early settlement. Mentioned in the Christian Bible, the Moslem Koran, and the Jewish Torah, many stories are associated with this shrub. It can reach 10 feet tall with a corresponding spread. Its new leaves have red tinges, and remain glossy all summer. The blossoms are 3 inches across and appear from late April to June, followed by baseball-sized edible fruit that slowly turns red and ripens by September. In winter, when it is deciduous, older branches should be removed to ensure its vigor.

LINHEIMER'S SENNA – *Senna lindheimeriana* – An open branched sparse deciduous shrub to 6 feet, Lindheimer's senna sports yellow one-inch blossoms from June until frost. A thornless legume, its pollinator does not live locally, so it does not produce any beans. The bright blossoms sparkle against plain backgrounds, while the angular branching structure adds winter interest.

CORALBERRY – *Symphoricarpos orbiculata* – Growing only to three feet tall, this deciduous shrub is covered with purple berries all winter. The tiny green leaves present a soft ferny aspect to shady and partly shady areas within the landscape – but it can handle bright sun as well. This is yet another plant found in the older parts of every west Texas town, as it is one of the many passalong plants brought to the region during the early settlement years.

YELLOW BELLS – *Tecoma stans* – Since 1995 this shrub has become immensely popular, especially the “Esparanza” cultivar. It shoots up to six feet tall, and has dozens of two inch yellow tubular blossoms from June to frost. Each winter it dies to the ground. It loves the hottest spot in the garden. Dark green compound leaves offset the brilliant blooms, and slender 3-inch beans form in late summer.

MEXICAN BUCKEYE – *Ugnadia speciosa* – Mexican buckeye blooms like a redbud in the spring. In the winter an unusual three-parted and round seedpod adds detail and interest. Mexican buckeye attains a 15-foot height, and its multi-trunk form spreads to 15 feet as well. Its lime-green compound leaves turn a bright gold in the fall landscape. To create beautiful necklaces Indians in west Texas strung the black seeds with a white eye together with the brilliant red seeds of mountain laurel for thousands of years. During the last years of the severe drought of the late 1990's and early 2000's Mexican buckeye suffered some damage from oyster scale, but after an infected branch is cut back to the ground, two more branches replaced them.