

Still More Native Hill Country Shrubs and Small Trees

It says something about the diversity of the flora in the Hill Country that this is the fourth column I have written on native shrubs and there are still others that won't be included. Here are some more shrubs or small trees common to our area.

Rusty blackhaw (*Viburnum rufidulum*) is an understory tree or shrub with glossy green opposite leaves with tiny red hairs on the leaf stems and center vein. Large white flower clusters are formed in early spring. The leaves turn maroon in the fall. It produces small blue berries that are edible.

The Goldenball leadtree (*Leucaena retusa*) is a leguminous airy small tree with bipinately compound leaves similar to mesquite trees. They are very drought tolerant and grow best in very well-drained soil. They are common on hillsides around Junction and Leakey. The flowers are conspicuous one inch yellow balls which are produced from spring to fall and form long thin bean-like seed pods.

Fragrant mimosa, or Pink mimosa (*Mimosa borealis*) is one of many mimosas that grow in Texas, but it is the most common in this area. It is usually a small shrub with compound leaves with tiny leaflets and many small prickles or thorns. It produces very showy $\frac{3}{4}$ inch pink spherical blooms in the spring which attract butterflies. It grows in dry limestone hillsides.

Eve's necklace (*Sophora affinis*) is a shrub or small tree with compound leaves with one inch oval leaflets. It produces pale pink blossoms in the spring which in turn make dark seed pods that are constricted between each seed, giving the appearance of a bead necklace, thus the name. There are many Eve's necklaces growing in South Llano River State Park outside of Junction.

Mexican silktassel or Lindheimer silktassel (*Garrya ovata*) is a multi-trunked evergreen shrub with two inch dark green leathery leaves. It is dioecious, meaning male and female flowers are on separate plants. Because it is evergreen and makes dense foliage, it provides birds with good winter protection.

Elbowbush or Spring herald (*Forestiera pubescens*) is a shrub with arching branches and leaves and twigs arranged on opposite sides of the branch. It is dioecious. Flowers are produced before any other trees or shrubs in late winter, thus the name Spring herald. Small, blue-black berries are produced on female plants which are eaten by wildlife.

Blanco crabapple, or Texas crabapple (*Malus ioensis* var. *texana*) is a shrub with a very limited range (Blanco, Kerr and Kendall counties) and, because it is a favorite of deer, it is threatened with extinction. It is a beautiful native crabapple with pink flowers in April

and small green apples in October. It has substantial thorns. Landowners are encouraged to grow this plant, in protected areas, to help maintain the species.

Toothache tree, Tickle tongue, or Lime prickly ash (*Zanthoxylum hirsutum*) is a fairly common, interesting shrub with small crinkled leaves and thorns that look like rose thorns. The leaves contain a substance that will numb your mouth if chewed and produce a citrus odor when crushed. Wildlife like the small red fruit. This is a larval host plant for the giant swallowtail butterfly. It is not usually eaten by deer.

American smoke tree (*Cotinus obovatus*) is an unusual shrub that grows primarily in Kentucky, Tennessee and adjoining states with a disjunct population here in Bandera, Kerr and Kendall counties. It has oval leaves with reddish leaf stems. In the spring it produces small blossoms on long red or purple hair-like stems in crowded clusters that give the shrub a smoke-like appearance.

There are numerous other native shrubs that I haven't discussed, mainly because they are not that common. Not all of the 35 species of shrubs that I have discussed in these four columns would be appropriate for any given place in your yard, but among all of these native shrubs everyone should be able to find several that work for them.

Most of the shrubs I have discussed can be found in local native plant nurseries, and I encourage everyone to plant as many as possible to contribute to the diversity of the Hill Country habitat.

In the future, there are still succulents, vines, and other groups of vegetation to talk about. Previous columns can be found at www.hillcountrynaturalist.org. Until next time...

Jim Stanley is a member of Riverside Nature Center and the Native Plant Society of Texas, a Texas Master Naturalist and author of "Hill Country Landowner's Guide". He can be reached at jstmn@krc.com. Previous columns can be seen at www.hillcountrynaturalist.org.