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DLIFE

SHORELINE NATURE TRAIL

COMMON TREES

—OF—

COOPER LAKE STATE PARK

DOCTOR'S CREEK UNIT

TEXAS STATE DOCUMENT
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PAN AMERICAN
EDINBURG, TEXAS 78539-3799



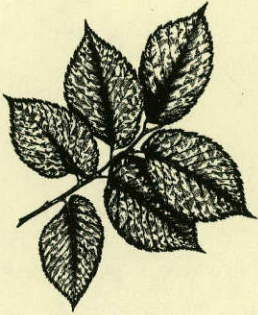
A SELF-GUIDED TOUR

Welcome to the Doctor's Creek Unit of Cooper Lake State Park!

Located in the Sulphur River Basin, the park is rich in natural and cultural resources. Diverse wildlife, desirable climate and dark deep black soils contributed to settlement of the area during both the prehistoric and historic periods. Prehistoric sites in this area, some as old as 9,000 BC, include the remains of Paleoindian, Archaic and Caddoan populations. Some of these sites are of considerable importance for regional and national research. Historic farmsteads are common in the area and date to as early as the mid 1850s. Years of farming and fire suppression caused soil erosion and resulted in the introduction of invasive plant species, reducing the diversity of wildflowers in the park.

We are in a transitional area of the Post Oak Savannah and the Blackland Prairie where vegetation is predominately grass mixed with a moderate variety of wildflowers. During the spring and summer months, prairie parsley, prairie plantain, Illinois bundleflower and turkey vetch bloom among the little bluestem, bushy bluestem and longspike tridens.

Enjoy the Shoreline Trail and make plans to watch the sun setting over the lake. While exploring other areas of the park, notice the beautiful mature oak woodland in the camping loop and keep watch for beautiful birds and wildlife that make Cooper Lake their home.



1

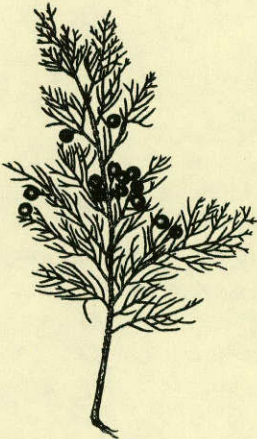
AMERICAN ELM

Ulmus americana

Other names: White Elm, Soft Elm, Water Elm, Common Elm and Swamp Elm.

A famous American tree admired for its vase-like shape, once planted as an ornamental tree for streets and parks. Attains a height of 120 feet, but generally under 70 feet.

Indians used the wood for canoes and the bast fiber for ropes. The fruit is often eaten by gallinaceous birds, and the young twigs and leaves are browsed by white-tailed deer, opossum and cottontail rabbits.



2

EASTERN RED CEDAR

Juniperus virginiana

Other names: Pencil Cedar, Virginia Juniper, Red Juniper, Carolina Cedar, Baton Rouge and Red Savin.

The Eastern red cedar grows to 70 feet. It grows in almost any soil type. The trees are either male or female. The female is more showy when loaded with dark blue fruit in the late fall or winter. The heartwood is a beautiful shade of red and the sapwood is white. The wood is wonderfully aromatic and is used for cedar chests and cedar closets. Fence posts have been made from the branches of this tree from the day the first settlers found it.



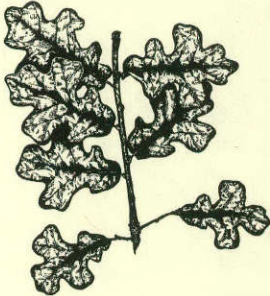
3

CEDAR ELM

Ulmus crassifolia

Other names: Scrub Elm, Basket Elm, Southern Rock Elm, Texas Elm, Red Elm and Olmo.

It is often planted as a shade tree, but the wood is considered inferior to other elms because of its brittle and knotty character. It attains a height of 90 feet, and is the only native elm that flowers and sets seed in the fall. Its leaves are small and sandpapery to the touch.



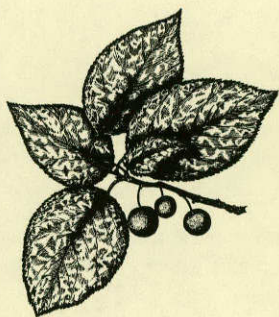
4

POST OAK

Quercus stellata

Other names: Iron Oak, Cross Oak, Branch Oak and Box Oak.

Post oak is the widest-ranging oak in Texas occurring in all areas except the High Plains and Trans-Pecos. It grows to more than 80 feet in height, but the majority range from 20 to 40 feet tall. Post oak is likely the most numerous oak in Texas. The wood is used for railroad crossties, firewood, furniture and lumber. The small acorns are eaten by deer, javelina, feral hogs, squirrel and wild turkey.



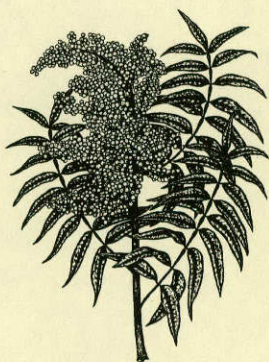
5

MEXICAN PLUM

Prunus mexicana

Other names: Big Tree Plum and Inca Plum.

Mexican plum is a single-trunked, irregular shaped tree reaching 25 feet in height. It is rather drought tolerant and has been widely used for grafting stock. Long before the flowering dogwood heralds the coming of spring, the Mexican plum foretells the demise of winter in the north central part of Texas by flaunting billowing clouds of white, fragrant flowers.



6

SHINING SUMAC

Rhus copallina

Other names: Wing-rib Sumac, Winged Sumac, Black Sumac, Mountain Sumac and Upland Sumac.

Shining sumac is a fast growing but short-lived tree reaching heights of 30 to 35 feet. It is generally found in openings and on the margins of timberlands and forests. The plants sucker readily, forming large colonies. Birds are fond of the fruit and pass the seeds in their droppings along fence-rows. This species produces male and female flowers on separate plants, with clusters of the fruit. The winged, feather-like leaves turn brilliant red in autumn.



7

PERSIMMON

Diospyros virginiani

Other names: Common Persimmon, Eastern Persimmon, Possumwood, Date Plum, Jove's Fruit and Winter Plum.

Persimmon can grow to 60 feet in height, although it is usually smaller. The male and female flowers occur on separate trees. The bright pink fruit are an astringent and puckery to taste when green, but after several freezes they ripen becoming somewhat softer, wrinkled and sweet with a high sugar content. Each fruit has 4-8 brown, oblong, flat, large leathery seeds. The fruit was known and appreciated by early settlers, being mentioned in writings of De Sota in 1539.

The fruit is eaten by at least 16 species of birds, also by raccoons, opossum, gray and fox squirrel, coyotes and white-tailed deer. The bark is known to have astringent medicine properties.



8

HONEY LOCUST

Gleditsia triacanthos

Other names: Sweet Locust, Thorny Locust, Sweet Bean Tree and Honey Shucks Locust.

Honey Locust is a viciously-thorned tree that grows to 100 feet in height. The three-pronged thorns of this tree can sometimes be 12 inches long, although some trees are thornless. The tree flowers late in the spring forming 12-18 long fruit pods in late summer. The pods are eaten by cattle, deer, cottontail rabbits and squirrels.



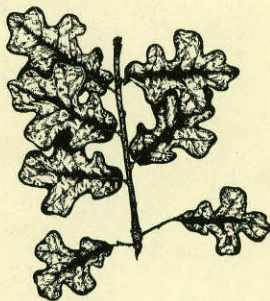
9

WINGED ELM

Ulmus alata

Other names: Cork Elm, Wahoo Elm and Witch Elm.

Winged Elm is usually less than 70 feet in height. It has conspicuous corky wings on the twigs and branches. This elm is a favorite shade and ornamental tree. It is easily transported, sprouts readily from seed, is a rapid grower, and is rather free of disease and insects. The wood is generally used for the same purposes as other elms, such as tool handles, vehicle parts and agricultural implements.



10

POST OAK

Quercus stellata

On the morning of May 22, 2004, this giant Post Oak tree collapsed and fell to the ground. In July, 2000, it was certified by the Texas Forest Service as the largest post oak tree in the State of Texas. It had a circumference of 212 inches, an average crown spread of 76 inches, and was 45 feet tall. This tree collapsed as a result of the tremendous weight of the huge branches that extended out as far as 40 feet from the trunk, a decayed area in the center of the base and a strong south wind. Estimated to be 150-200 years old, this giant tree has always been a highlight of the Shoreline Nature Trail.



11

WATER OAK

Quercus nigra

Other names: Possum Oak, Spotted Oak, Duck Oak and Punk Oak.

Water oak grows rapidly and attains heights of almost 80 feet. It occurs in swamps, low flats and stream banks, and is a part of a complex consisting of the Willow, Water and Laurel oaks. Water oak is a widely planted tree and in its most typical form, has dark green, spoon-shaped leaves that vary in persistence from completely deciduous to almost totally evergreen.



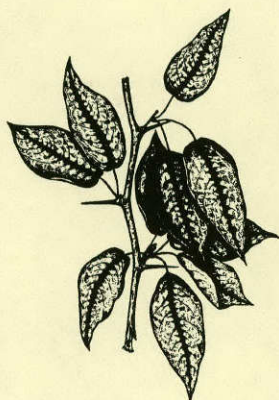
12

GREEN ASH

Fraxinus pennsylvanica

Other names: Red Ash, Darling Ash, Swamp Ash, River Ash and Water Ash.

Green ash is the most wide-ranging ash in Texas, growing to 80 feet in height. The wood is coarse-grained, heavy, hard and strong weighing 44 pounds per cubic foot. The wood is used for tool handles, furniture, interior finishing and railroad cross-ties.



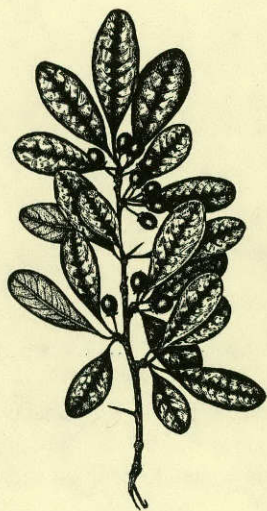
13

BOIS D'ARC

Maclura pomifera

Other names: Osage Orange, Bodark, Bow Wood, Hedge Apple, Horse Apple Hedge, Naranjo Chino, Yellow Wood and Mock-Orange.

A member of the mulberry family, this tree is known for its bright orange or yellow, heavy, hard, durable and strong wood, which weighs 48 pounds per cubic foot. Height usually reaches 40 feet, occasionally 60 feet, and the tree has a milky sap and bears stout thorns. The Bois d'Arc name was given by the French, meaning "Bow-Wood," with reference to the fact that the Osage Indians made bows from the wood. Yellow dye was once made from the root bark and the bark of the trunk was used for tanning leather. For many years, farmers and ranchers have used Bois d'Arc wood for fence posts, and early settlers once used sections of tree trunks for foundation blocks in home construction.



14

CHITTAMWOOD

Bumelia lanuginosa

Other names: Gum Bumelia, Woollybucket Bumelia, Gum Elastic, Woolly Buckthorn, Gum Woollybucket, Woolly Bumelia, False Buckthorn, Shittamwood, Ironwood and Coma.

Chittamwood grows to 80 feet in height. The thick, firm leaves are usually dark green on the upper surface; they appear white, gray or tan on the underside because of the numerous hairs. Birds are very fond of the black berries produced by this tree.



15

HERCULES'-CLUB

Zanthoxylum clava-herculis

Other names: Pepper bark, Toothache Tree, Tickle-tongue and Prickly Ash.

Hercules'-Club can attain 50 feet in height, but is more commonly 15 to 20 feet tall. It is common in woods edge and fence-row associations where it is quite clear that the seeds have been voided by birds and other wildlife while resting in the trees and on wires.



16

SHUMARD RED OAK

Quercus shumardii

Other names: Swamp Red Oak, Shumard Oak and Spotted Oak.

Shumard red oak is a large tree reaching 120 feet in height. It is never found in large groves but usually occurs singly and widely spaced. It is a very desirable shade and ornamental tree because of its beautiful fall color which ranges from golden yellow to brilliant red.



17

WILLOW OAK

Quercus phellos

Other Names: Pin Oak, Peach Oak, Swamp Willow Oak, Sandjack Oak and Swamp Oak.

This graceful oak grows to 100 feet in height. It is easily confused with its relatives, Laurel oak and Water oak. It is usually found in the wetter soils of East Texas. Willow oak is deciduous and displays attractive golden leaves in the fall. Its small acorns are eaten by wildlife and are especially important in the diets of various waterfowl.

FURTHER READING

Trees of Texas: An Easy Guide to Leaf Identification
by Carmine A. Stahl and Ria McElvaney.

Common Texas Grasses: An Illustrated Guide
by Frank Gould.

Plants illustrations from *Tree, Shrubs and Woody Vines of the Southwest* by Robert A. Vines with drawings by Sarah Kahlden Arendale, 1960, University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas.

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