

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

THE
HONEY CREEK
NATURE TRAIL

COMMON TREES
AND SHRUBS

— OF —

COOPER LAKE
STATE PARK

SOUTH SULPHUR UNIT



A SELF-GUIDED TOUR

Welcome to Cooper Lake State Park!

Welcome to Cooper Lake State Park! The Honey Creek self-guided nature trail is approximately one-fifth of a mile long and is located in the South Sulphur Unit. Along the trail, fifteen markers indicate the common flora of the Post Oak Savannah. The numbers correspond with this booklet which includes facts and other interesting information. We hope you enjoy the trail, take time to look at the trees and keep an eye open for wildlife.



1

SMOOTH SUMAC

Rhus glabra

This thicket forming shrub grows in moist rich soil, or on dry sandy hills. Sumac is an important food source for seed-eating birds, and also provides shelter for birds and small mammals. Native Americans used various species of sumac for basketry, dyes and medicines.



2

BOIS D'ARC

Maclura pomifera

The Bois d'Arc can grow in poor soil with low moisture. The common name, Osage-orange, comes from the Osage tribe which traded the trees, wood and bows of the wood with numerous other tribes. This tree contains a fruit most people refer to as a horse apple or hedge apple. The name comes from the French, meaning 'wood of bow,' because Native Americans and early settlers used this wood to create their bow and arrows. T. M. Hamilton in *Native American Bows* (1972) reported that in 1810 a bow made of Osage-orange wood cost one horse and one blanket. Resistant to insects and rot, the wood was used by early settlers for fence posts.

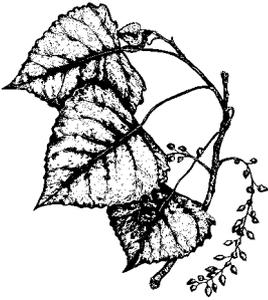


3

HACKBERRY

Celtis occidentalis

This tree has a distinct bark that is gray or light brown, and contains smooth corky “warts” or ridges. The spots on the leaves are actually a nipple gall caused by very small insects called a psyllid. They lay eggs in the emerging leaves and the larval development causes the nipple-like growth to develop around them. The damage is cosmetic, not lethal.



4

EASTERN COTTONWOOD

Populus deltoids

The cottonwood is a short-lived, fast growing tree that thrives near water. On average, the cottonwood only lives for 30-60 years. The tree received its name because the seeds have tiny cottony hairs that drift in the wind. When blown by the wind the leaves make a watery sound.



5

PERSIMMON

Diospyros virginiana

These trees turn yellow, orange, red and purple during the fall. The fruit is edible by humans and wildlife. Unripe fruit has a sour taste that will make your mouth pucker. The fruit is widely eaten by foxes, deer, raccoons, skunks and songbirds.



6

EASTERN RED CEDAR

Juniperus virginiana

An evergreen, this cedar grows well in many different soil types and cannot live in the shade. The male red cedar produces yellow pollen that is known to irritate allergies. The female produces a little blue berry that is toxic to humans, but is used as a spice in very small amounts. Because it is evergreen, this tree provides good winter shelter for wildlife seeking refuge from wind and precipitation.



7

WINGED ELM

Ulmus alata

The winged elm grows only in the eastern third of Texas. This tree is a good source of browse for white-tailed deer. The elm received its name because if you look at the branches they have corky projections on each side of the limbs that resemble wings. This elm is also known as the cork elm, witch elm and wahoo elm.



8

HONEY LOCUST

Gleditsia triacanthos

The honey locust is undesirable to landowners because of its three-pronged thorns that can grow up to 12 inches long. These thorns have been the cause of many punctured tires. They are easy to identify by their numerous thorns, distinctive bark and compound leaves. This tree produces beans which may be eaten by white-tailed deer.



9

HERCULES'-CLUB

Zanthoxylum clava-herculis

In this region, the Hercules'-club grows in acidic almost sterile soil. It is commonly found along fence lines, because it produces berries that are carried by birds and then deposited in the soil. The Hercules'-club is also known as the toothache tree. It gets this name because if the bark is chewed it causes a numbing sensation in the mouth.



10

WILLOW OAK

Quercus phellos

This tree grows in frequently flooded areas, and is found throughout East Texas. The willow oak will thrive in soils that are flooded for more than half the year. This oak produces acorns and has a very high value to wildlife. A variety of wildlife and birds eat the acorns once they have fallen.



11

BLACK HICKORY

Carya texana

The black hickory is very adapted to growing in regions with rainfall ranging from 26-52 inches per year, and can reach heights up to 140 feet. Hickory makes a very high quality fuel, yielding high heat. This tree is used for fence posts, skis, tool handles, gunstocks and was formerly used for barrel hoops. Squirrels are not discouraged by the round, very thick, hard shelled nut.



12

PECAN

Carya illinoensis

This tree is the most commonly known of all hickories. The pecan tree thrives in rich deep bottomland soils, but will adapt to lesser sites. This species grows all throughout the state of Texas. Most people recognize the tree because of its edible nut. The Tonkawa Indians used to gather pecans to trade with the first Anglo settlers of Texas. This is the state tree of Texas.



13

BLACKJACK OAK

Quercus marilandica

The blackjack oak grows in the eastern half of the state on acid sands, sandy loam and clay soil. It grows up to 50 feet in height and has distinctive large, three-lobed leaves that are club-shaped. This oak cannot survive in poorly drained or compacted soils. The blackjack oak and the post oak are commonly found growing together.



14

POST OAK

Quercus stellata

This region of East Texas receives its name from the post oak tree (The Post Oak Savannah). This oak is extremely sensitive to change in the soil grade, and even something as simple as paving a road over the roots can kill the tree. The post oak gets its name because it has a high durability when used as a fence post. The leaves have a very distinctive shape and can be looked at as a cowboy hat sitting on top of a post. The acorns are popular with squirrels and other wildlife.



15

HONEY MESQUITE

Prosopis glandulosa

This is one of the most widely distributed trees in Texas, and is armed with sharp thorns that grow up to two inches. The mesquite can adapt to almost any soil and is extremely drought resistant. The tree is covered with fragrant yellow flowers in the spring and summer. The long bean pods are a food source for wildlife and livestock. The wood is popular for smoking meat.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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Thanks for visiting the South Sulphur Unit of Cooper Lake State Park! We hope to see you again soon.

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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