

Along the Texas Native Trail

There are three ecological regions of Texas represented in the Texas Native Trail Exhibit: East Texas Pineywoods, South Texas Plains, and the Hill Country. Find the native plants below and learn how Texans have used them throughout history.

South Texas Plains

Prickly Pear (*Opuntia* sp.): This has pads known as Nopals. Young pads are eaten raw or cooked as a seasonal dish. Mature pads can be split, the inside scooped out and partially sewn back together (using Yucca Fibers) to form a pouch. These pouches can be sealed with pine resin and used to carry water.

Tunas – Prickly Pear Fruits (*Opuntia* sp.): Tunas were a major food item for the Native Americans. Spines were burned off and the tunas were eaten raw or cooked. Today they are still made into jellies and wine.

Yucca Leaf (*Yucca treculeana*): Its leaves can be stripped down to the point making a crude needle and thread. Fibers extracted by soaking and pounding leaves are still used in Mexico to make mats.

Sotol (*Dasyilirion* sp.): The bulbs were baked in underground pits and eaten like artichokes. The stalks were used in the construction of rough shelters.

Mesquite Beans (*Prosopis glandulosa*): Beans are crushed and rolled into balls as a traveling food. It is ground into meal and used in cooking as flour.

Anaqua (*Ehretia anaqua*): Also referred to as the manzanita and sandpaper tree. Its leaves are used as mild sandpaper; xeric species is suitable for ornamental planting. Fragrant white flower clusters are followed by small orange fruit clusters used as bird and mammal food.

Brasil (*Condalia* sp.): Also called Bluewood and Chaparral found in the Hill Country and Southwest Texas. An Evergreen, its light, lustrous green leaves are primary deer browse. The small drupes are bird food and it makes a really nice jelly, Brazil wine, and bee bread.

Cenizo (*Leucophyllum frutescens*): Not your true sage, it is a misnomer. Other names used are wild lilac, Texas silver sage, Barometer Bush. It is a lovely ornamental shrub. Ash gray or green velvet leaves, pink, violet, and rarely white flowers. In Mexico its leaves were used as a tea for colds, fever, and flu treatment. Also a sedative used to help induce sleep.

Guajillo (*Acacia berlandieri*): A lovely green fern like compound leaf structure. It is a prime protein plant. Deer browse the leaves and beans. An excellent light colored honey source, the nectar is taken from its cream colored flower heads. It is an important and common component of the chaparral biome.

Hill Country

Buckeye Seeds (*Aesculus* sp.): These seeds were crushed and put into a cloth bag and used in still waters to stun fish. The fish could then be scooped off the waters surface. Used today as a component in sunscreens. Dried seeds were carried in your pocket to ward off arthritis.



Acorns (*Quercus* sp.): Acorns were a food staple used by primitive societies in temperate areas worldwide. Leached in the water to remove the tannins, they were dried and crushed into tasty and nutritious flours.

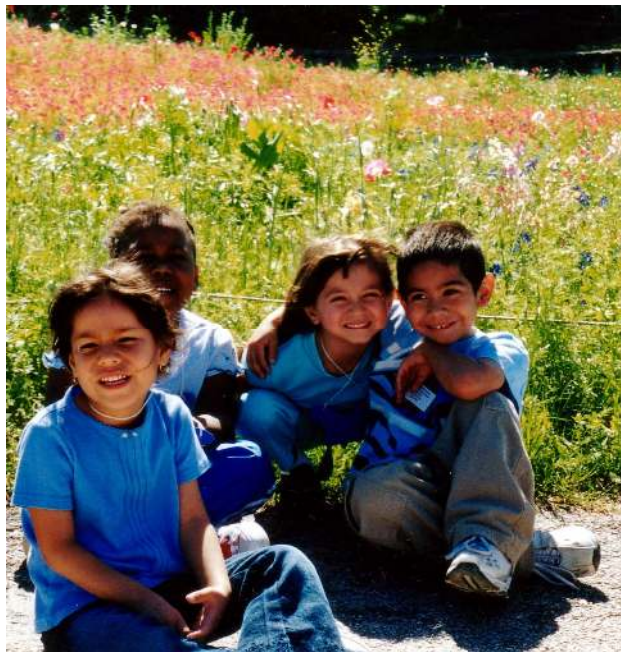
Live Oak Wood (*Quercus virginiana*): This wood is the second heaviest and the densest of all commercial wood. Ribs of “Old Ironsides” were made of Live Oak. Engineers sought out Hill Country trees killed by oak wilt as rib replacements when repairing the original ship.

Bois D’arc (*Maclura pomifera*): Wood used to make Native American bows. Fruit from female trees said to repel cockroaches when placed around baseboards.

Agarita Roots (*Mahonia trifoliolata*): Roots and stems yield a yellow dye. Fruits can be eaten raw or made into jelly or wine. Fruit is tart.

Persimmon Fruits (*Diospiros* sp.): Female trees produce fleshy fruits, which are tasty if eaten after all the green is gone. It’s used to cook with breads, puddings, jellies, and wine.

Juniper Berries (*Juniperus* sp.): Whole berries are used to flavor gin. Crushed berries are used as a flavoring in cooking. Male trees produce clouds of pollen, which gives some people severe allergies known as “Cedar Fever.”



Blue Sage (*Salvia ballotaeflora*): Leaves and flowers are used to flavor wild meats and sausages.

Sumac Berries (*Rhus* sp.): Acidic fruits used to make a tart drink called “Sumac-ade” and used as a meat tenderizer.

Soapberry or Jaboncillo (*Sapindus drummondii*): This is the only native tree to naturally grow in all 10 vegetation regions of Texas. Its fruits create lather when crushed in water and were used as a soap substitute.



East Texas Pineywoods

Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*): A conifer with the common Texas native being the Bald Cypress. Its leaves turn a rusty color before they fall. The Cypress is one of the most ancient genera of trees. Along with ginkgoes and sequoias, the Cypress has multi wood uses. It is a riparian type.

Cattails (*Typha latifolia*): Flowers and starchy roots used as food. Leaves were woven into mats.

Palmetto Palms (*Sabal minor and Sabal texana*): Its hearts are eaten raw or cooked. Sabal Texana Fruits, known as “Micheros,” are edible and still featured in Mexican markets. Large, fan shaped fronds (leaves) are used as a thatch.

Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*): This is a Southern Magnolia. Magnolias are one of the oldest of the flowering plants. It has large, leathery leaves. It also has lovely, large white flowers, each having up to 12 white petals. It is found in the Southern woodlands. It is also of the riparian native habitat.

Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*): Large thorns (modified branches) used as spear points, gigs, and bag fasteners. Corckscrew-like bean pods contain high sugar content in a molasses-like substance stored between the seeds.

Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*): Long needles used by Native Americans to weave baskets. Large seeds were a staple food item. Sap was harvested and made into turpentine and other resin products such as rosin for violin and other stringed instrument bows. Wood highly prized as premium yellow pine timber.

Sweet Gum (*Liquidamber styraciflua*): It is found in East Texas, Southern states, and Appalachia. This is a fine, ornamental tree that requires an acidic soil. It has deciduous, star shaped leaves, turning red with yellow venation in the fall. It has many medicinal qualities especially to help heal wounds and skin problems. In pioneer times, the sap was used as chewing gum.

Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) – Growing in sandy soil throughout East Texas. Sassafras root was used medicinally – generally in a tea that allegedly purified the blood. Also used to flavor medicines, root beer and candy. Oil of sassafras is the ingredient. The leaves are also used as “gumbo file” in Cajun cooking.

Horsetail (*Equisetum sp.*)—Also known as “scouring rush” because bunches of horsetails were used to scrub pots.