

American Plum



American Plum (*Prunus americana*)

General Description

The wild plum is a native tall shrub to small tree which is thorny, winter-hardy, and thicket-forming. Edible fruit used to make preserves and jellies.

Leaves and Buds

Bud Arrangement - Alternate.

Bud Color - Brown to dark brown.

Bud Size - 1/8 to 1/4 inch.

Leaf Type and Shape - Simple leaves, elliptical to oblong-ovate.

Leaf Margins - Margins are sharply and often doubly-serrate.

Leaf Surface - Smooth to slightly hairy along the midrib beneath.

Leaf Length - 2 to 4 inches.

Leaf Width - 1 to 2 inches.

Leaf Color - Medium green, changing to yellow or reddish in autumn.

Flowers and Fruits

Flower Type - Cross-pollinating, fascicles.

Flower Color - White.

Fruit Type - Drupe, seed is a compressed stone.

Fruit Color - Fruits are subglobose, red to yellow when mature.

Form

Growth Habit - Round-headed crown, suckers freely.

Texture - Medium, summer; medium, winter.

Crown Height - 8 to 10 feet.

Crown Width - 8 to 10 feet.

Bark Color - Grayish-black and becomes quite scaly on older plants.

Root System - Somewhat shallow, wider than crown spread.

Environmental Requirements

Soils

Soil Texture - Adapted to a wide variety of soil types.

Soil pH - 5.5 to 7.5.

Windbreak Suitability Group - 1, 3, 4, 4C, 5.

Cold Hardiness

USDA Zone 3.

Water

Fair to good drought tolerance.

Light

Full sun to partial shade.

Uses

Conservation/Windbreaks

Medium to tall shrub for farmstead windbreaks, highway and riparian plantings.

Wildlife

Important to songbirds and animals for nesting, loafing, and bedding area. Fruit is not a preferred food for songbirds and game birds. Twigs and foliage browsed by deer.

Agroforestry Products

Food - Fruit eaten fresh and processed as preserves and jellies.

Medicinal - Used by Native Americans to treat skin abrasions.

Urban/Recreational

Used for naturalizing and border plantings. Suckers profusely which is objectionable in home landscapes.

Cultivated Varieties

Prunus x 'Alderman', 'Pipestone', 'Tecumseh', 'Toka', 'Underwood', and 'Waneta' are fruiting cultivars of plums.

Related Species

Beach Plum (*P. maritima*)

Princess Kay Plum (*P. nigra* 'Princess Kay') - Double white flowers, not very drought tolerant.

Pests

Common diseases include stem decay, branch cankers, black knot, and plum pockets. Extracts of leaves and flowers are toxic to various insects.