



PLANT OF THE MONTH: Carolina Buckthorn

Carolina False Buckthorn, Indian Cherry

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Rhamnus caroliniana*

(*Frangula caroliniana*)

FAMILY: Rhamnaceae

Type: Late deciduous small tree or large shrub.

Natural Habitat: Moist woods and bottomlands, along streams from Virginia to Edwards Plateau to Gulf of Mexico. In Texas, they are found in Piney Woods, Post Oak Woods, Houston, Blacklands, and the Edwards Plateau.

Growth: Slow; reaching 12 to 25 feet.

Deer Resistance: May be browsed especially during times of drought. All young trees must be protected from deer browsing and rubbing for several years.

Wildlife: Fruit attracts a variety of birds. Larval host to the American Snout Butterfly.

Light Tolerance: Dappled shade, part shade to full sun.

Flowers: Spring to summer; small and inconspicuous, pale yellow-green, bell-shaped, appearing at the base of leaves.

Fruit: ½ inch berry; turns red in late summer, ripening to black in October and consumed by several species of birds.

Leaves: Shiny, deciduous, alternate, simple, elliptical to oblong, 2 to 5 inches long; veins are parallel and turn upward near edges of leaf creating a slightly wavy margin.

Water Requirements: Medium

Soil Requirements: Sand, loam, clay, limestone; can tolerate poor drainage.

PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS: Space trees 8-12 feet apart. Dig a hole at least two times wider than, but the same depth as the root ball in the nursery container. Sides of the hole should be irregular, not smooth. Remove plant from container, taking care to support the root ball. Loosen exterior roots gently with your fingers. If plant is root-bound and cannot be loosened by hand, the outer roots may be cut in several places. Lift the plant by the root ball and place into the hole. Backfill hole, using soil dug from hole. Do not add any soil to the top of the root ball. Gently firm the soil with your hands, but do not tamp it down. Place 2-3 inches of mulch over the bare soil around planting and the root ball but not touching the base of the plant.

WATERING INSTRUCTIONS: Water deeply after planting to settle soil around roots. Then water every 7-10 days, or more often as needed, during the first growing season. Before watering, check for soil moisture at a depth of an inch or two at the edge of the root ball. Skip a watering after a rainfall of 1 or more inches. Maintain this watering schedule until the first fall. Reduce watering during the cool fall and winter months. In a "normal" year, no watering may be necessary during the fall and winter, but during a dry period, monthly watering will be needed. Second Spring and thereafter: water 1-2 times monthly only during periods of drought. Once established, which may take 2-4 years, natives will survive with little supplemental irrigation if rainfall averages around 30 inches/yr.

OPERATION NICE! TIP: Carolina buckthorn is thornless and almost evergreen but may show yellow and red color just before dropping its leaves in the late fall or early winter. It is prettiest under the shade of a large tree but needs at least 3 or 4 hours of sun. In full sun, the plant tends to lose some of its charm, becoming dense and shrubby. Many bird species feed on the fruit which is toxic to humans. Plant diversity in the landscape encourages a healthy, sustaining habitat for wildlife.

Care Instructions are provided by the Native Plant Society of Texas- Boerne Chapter. Our meetings are free and open to the public and begin at 7:00 pm with a social time at 6:30 pm on the first Tuesday, September-June at the Cibolo Nature Center Auditorium. Please visit our website www.npsot.org/boerne for other suggested NICE! Plants of the Month.