

RED MULBERRY

Morus rubra L.

Plant Symbol = MORU2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS National Plant Data Center



@ PLANTS

Uses

Ethnobotanic: Red mulberry was used by several Native American tribes to treat a variety of ailments. The sap was used to treat ringworm (Foster and Duke 2000). The Cherokee made a tea from the leaves of the plant for treatment of dysentery, weakness, and difficulty urinating (Hamel and Chiltoskey 1975). The Comanche used the fruit of the red mulberry as a food source (Carlson and Jones 1940, Moerman 1998).

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

General: Mulberry Family (Moraceae). Red mulberry is a tree that can reach 20 m in height and 45 cm in diameter. Red mulberry has a short trunk and stout, spreading branches that form a round-

topped crown. The bark can be smooth or scaly and is dark brown in color. The branchlets are covered with short hairs. The leaves are simple, alternate, and up to 2 dm long. The leaves are broad, egg-shaped, and lobed. The base of the leaf is square, as if it has been cut off abruptly. The tip of the leaf is pointed. The leaves have sharply serrated margins. The upper leaf surface is rough to the touch. The lower surface is soft and covered with short hairs. The petioles are 2 to 3 cm long and produce a milky fluid when broken. The catkins that bear stamens are 2 to 5 cm long. The catkins that bear pistils are 2 to 2.5 cm long. Red mulberry has aggregate fruits that are 2 to 3 cm long. The fruits are juicy and have a dark purple color.

Distribution: For current distribution, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Habitat: Red mulberry is found in floodplains, river valleys, and moist hillsides.

Adaptation

Red mulberry is fire intolerant. However, it colonizes post-fire sites when sufficient moisture is available.

Establishment

Red mulberry seeds can be sown in the fall without stratification or in the spring after 30 to 90 days of storage at temperatures between 33 to 41 °F in moist sand. Red mulberry can also be artificially propagated from stem cuttings. Red mulberry prefers deep well-drained soil that is high in organic matter.

Pests and Potential Problems

Grown in its native habitat and using local seed stock, red mulberry should not be prone to debilitating pests.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

These materials are readily available from commercial plant sources. Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) office for more information. Look in the phone book under "United States Government." The Natural Resources Conservation Service will be listed under the subheading "Department of Agriculture."

References

Burns, R.M. & B.H. Honkala (Tech. Coordinators) 1990. *Silvics of North America. Vol. 2. Hardwoods.* Agriculture Handbook 654. USDA, Forest Service, Washington D.C. 877 pp.

Carlson, G.G. & V.H. Jones 1940. *Some notes on uses of plants by the Comanche Indians.* Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters 25:517-542.

Correl, D.S. & M.C. Johnston 1970. *Manual of the vascular plants of Texas.* Texas Research Foundation, Renner, Texas. 1881 pp.

Foster, S. & J.A. Duke 2000. *A field guide to medicinal plants of eastern and central North America.* Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, Massachusetts. 411 pp.

Great Plains Flora Association 1986. *Flora of the Great Plains.* University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. 1392 pp.

Hamel, P.B. & M.U. Chiltoskey 1975. *Cherokee plants their uses-a 400 year history.* Herald Publishing Company, Sylva, North Carolina. 65 pp.

Harlow, W.M., E.S. Harrar, J.W. Hardin, and F.M. White 1996. *Textbook of dendrology.* 8th edition. McGraw-Hill Inc., New York, New York. 534pp.

Lamson, N.I. 1990. *Morus rubra* L. red mulberry. IN: Burns, R.M. and B.H. Honkala (Tech. Coordinators) *Silvics of North America, Vol. 2. Hardwoods.* Agriculture Handbook 654. USDA Forest Service, Washington, D.C. Pages 470-473.

Moerman, D.E. 1998. *Native American ethnobotany.* Timber Press, Portland, Oregon. 927 pp.

Moerman, D.E. 1999. *Native American ethnobotany database: Foods, drugs, dyes and fibers of native North American peoples.* The University of Michigan-Dearborn, Michigan.
<http://www.umd.umich.edu/cgi-bin/herb>

United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service 2001. *Fire effects information system.* Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fire Sciences Laboratory, Boise, Idaho.
<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/tree/morrub/index.html>

University of Arkansas. 2001. *Horticulture 3103 summary sheet.* Department of Horticulture, Little Rock, Arkansas.
http://www.uark.edu/campus-resources/cotinus/plants4_html/morurubr.html

Prepared By:

Matthew D. Hurteau
Formerly USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center, c/o Environmental Horticulture Department, University of California, Davis, California

Species Coordinator:

M. Kat Anderson
USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center, c/o Plant Sciences Department, University of California, Davis, California

Edited: 30May2002 jsp; 060802 jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Read about [Civil Rights at the Natural Resources Conservation Service.](#)