**Arbutus texana**
Texas Madrone

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### INTRODUCTION

This native North American evergreen tree has beautiful peeling bark and reaches a height of 40 feet but many trees are much smaller than this (Fig. 1). As the tree ages, the outer bark drops off to reveal the smooth, new bark which can range in color from white, apricot, tan, or dark red, and the mixture of colors between old and new bark is quite striking. The dark green leaves, with paler undersides, are joined in springtime with small, white flowers which have an interesting shape, almost like small lanterns. These blooms are followed by the production of orange or red berries which ripen in fall. Berries are very brightly colored and will attract attention in any landscape.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Scientific name:** *Arbutus texana*  
**Pronunciation:** ar-BEW-tus teck-SAY-nuh  
**Common name(s):** Texas Madrone  
**Family:** Ericaceae  
**USDA hardiness zones:** 7 through 8 (Fig. 2)  
**Origin:** native to North America  
**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; shade tree; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; residential street tree

**Figure 1.** Mature Texas Madrone.

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

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**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 25 to 40 feet  
**Spread:** 15 to 25 feet  
**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette  
**Crown shape:** upright; vase shape  
**Crown density:** moderate  
**Growth rate:** medium  
**Texture:** medium  

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** crenate; entire  
**Leaf shape:** oblong; ovate  
**Leaf venation:** pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** broadleaf evergreen; evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** white  
**Flower characteristics:** showy; spring flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** oval; round  
**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch  
**Fruit covering:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** orange; red  
**Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; no thorns  
**Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure  
**Breakage:** resistant  
**Current year twig color:** green; gray  
**Current year twig thickness:** medium

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*Figure 2.* Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Culture

**Light requirement:** tree grows in full sun  
**Soil tolerances:** loam; sand; alkaline; well-drained  
**Drought tolerance:** high

Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers  
**Outstanding tree:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Multiple trunks arise from the ground much like those of crape myrtle. Lower foliage and branches are often removed to show off this feature. Plant this tree to display the trunks near a patio, deck, walk or other area where people come close to the tree. A row of Texas Madrone planted on 15 to 20 foot centers can enlighten the entry way to an office park, condominium complex, or add character to a residential street.

Texas Madrone grows in full sun on any well-drained soil, acid or alkaline. It appears to be a very adaptable tree and should do well in a variety of landscape sites.

Propagation is by seed or micropropagation. Improved selections can probably be developed through micropropagation techniques.

**Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.