

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS

Lindheimer Chapter

PLANT OF THE MONTH
JUNE, 2010

CANYON MOCK ORANGE, *PHILADELPHUS ERNESTII*



The Genus *Philadelphus* includes a number of species that are known collectively as “Mock Orange.” The Canyon Mock Orange is a rare species that is endemic to five counties in the Texas Hill Country: Blanco, Comal, Hays, Kendall and Travis. When seen, it is usually near streams in moist, well drained soils and among boulders on bluffs of shaded canyons where it is protected from predation by deer. It is a small (1’ -3’ tall) open growing shrub with 1 ½” leaves that have three distinct veins. The flowers of the Canyon Mock Orange, like most of the plants in this genus, are pleasantly fragrant. They appear in April and May and have four petals and numerous yellow stamens.

Although this plant is uncommon in the wild (it is listed as a “Species of Concern” by the State of Texas), it can be found at native plant nurseries which may help to save it. Its fragrant flowers and compact size make it an attractive shrub for planting near the house. Give it conditions similar to where it grows naturally: partial shade in a moist but well drained soil. It has little resistance to browsing by deer (one of the reasons it is threatened), so it will need protection.

A nearly identical species, the Texas Mock Orange (*Philadelphus texensis*), grows in the southern counties of the Edwards Plateau and differs mainly in the types of hairs on the underside of the leaf.