

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS

Lindheimer Chapter

PLANT OF THE MONTH

APRIL, 2011

BLANCO CRABAPPLE, *MALUS IOENSIS* VAR. *TEXANA*



The Blanco or Texas Crabapple is a small tree (12' – 15') found naturally in only a few counties in Central Texas, where it grows along stream banks and the heads of canyons. It is a variety of the Prairie Crabapple (*Malus ioensis*), which can be found throughout much of the central US. Our local variety differs from the species in having smaller, broader leaves that are covered by dense white hairs on the lower surface.

The Blanco Crabapple makes an interesting small landscape tree. It blooms in April and May with pale pink fragrant flowers. These are followed by yellow-green fruit that ripen in October. The small apples (1 ¼") are loved by many species of animals, however, they are extremely bitter when eaten raw. They do make a great jelly though, if enough sugar is used. In the winter the stiff limbs give it a statuesque appearance. Plant it in full sun for maximum blooms and fruit.

This tree is becoming more difficult to find in the wild due to heavy browsing by deer. When it is seen it is frequently protected by a "nurse" plant such as a brushy cedar. It is available at some nurseries specializing in native trees and should be given consideration for use in the landscape. It definitely requires protection from deer.