

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS

Lindheimer Chapter

PLANT OF THE MONTH
JULY, 2012

BLUEWOOD CONDALIA OR BRASIL, *CONDALIA HOOKERI*



Condalia Trees in Gruene, Tx



Condalia
Flower & Bee



Condalia Fruit (Ripe—black
& Unripe—green and red)



USDA Range Map: Texas

Condalia hookeri, commonly known as Bluewood Condalia or Brasil, is one of the most desirable wildlife plants. It's usually seen as a thorny shrub, but it can grow to a 30' tree given enough space and sun.

Condalia is a valuable food plant for many species of animals. The flowers are very small, greenish, and quite inconspicuous, but bees and butterflies have no trouble finding them. The blooms are followed by small fruit, which start off green, then turn red and finally black when they are fully ripe. A benefit to wildlife is the fact that Condalia doesn't bloom and fruit all at once, but rather it's continually blooming and fruiting over the entire summer and fall, providing for wildlife all season long.

In addition to its food value, it's a wonderful cover plant. Each branch is tipped with a sharp thorn, and in the wild it can form impenetrable thickets which birds and small mammals can use to escape from predators. As you might expect, it is a part of the (mostly thorny) South Texas shrub community, but it will grow as far north as Travis County.

Condalia can also be an attractive landscape plant. Its small lime green evergreen leaves are closely spaced on the branches, giving the plant a unique look. It can be used either as a specimen plant or an evergreen privacy screen. Another reason to love this plant is its drought tolerance. During the current drought, even as live oaks and cedar are suffering, Condalia has remained as fresh and green as ever. It is hard to find in local nurseries but it is worth the effort to look for it. Alternatively, try to start your own from fresh, ripe seeds or semi-hardwood cuttings. Protect young plants from deer.