

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS

Lindheimer Chapter

PLANT OF THE MONTH MAY, 2014

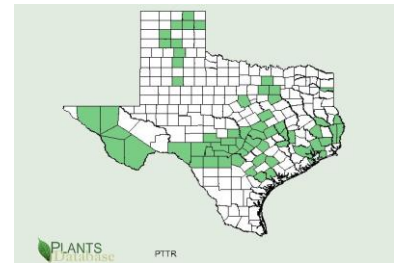
Wafer Ash, *Ptelea trifoliata*



Wafer Ash



Seed Cluster



USDA Range Map - Texas

Wafer Ash is not actually an ash, but rather a hardy member of the Citrus Family (*Rutacea*). It is found throughout much of the eastern two thirds of the US and north to Canada. In Texas it occurs throughout most of the state, with the exception of the southernmost parts, but it is most common in the Edwards Plateau. Here it is at home as a small understory tree or shrub, in partly shady locations in both moist soil as well as dry rocky sites.

Another common name for Wafer Ash, 'Hop Tree,' comes from the use by early settlers of the bitter seeds as a substitute for hops in making beer. The leaves are aromatic with a musky, lemonlike smell that some people find unpleasant. The aromatic bark and roots have been used as a substitute for quinine and other medicinal purposes.

Although not widely used as a landscape plant, it is very adaptable to various conditions. It has inconspicuous but fragrant flowers in early spring, followed by interesting winged seeds. The flower nectar attracts various butterflies, and the plant is a host for several types of swallowtail species. In the fall, the leaves provide reliable yellow color in shady locations. Deer tend to leave Wafer Ash alone.

Text by John Siemssen. Photos by Joseph A. Marcus, Wildflower Center

Previous Plants of the Month can be found on the NPSOT Lindheimer Chapter Website:

<http://npsot.org/wp/lindheimer/plant-of-the-month/>