

Friday, March 1, 2024

Maclura pomifera

Scientific name: *Maclura pomifera* (Raf.)
C.K.Schneid.

Family: *Moraceae*

Common name: Osage Orange, Bois d'arc, Horse Apple

This is a curious member of the mulberry family, notable for its fruits, which are the size of an orange, with rough skin and a bright green color.

It is a deciduous tree that can grow up to about 20 m tall in its native habitat, with a short trunk covered in dark orange-brown, fissured bark and branches that are usually thorny. The leaves are ovate-lanceolate, with a rounded base and a pointed tip. As a dioecious species, it has separate sexes on different plants. The flowers are very small; the male flowers are clustered in subglobose inflorescences 2 to 3 cm long. The female flowers have white hairs, are grouped in globose inflorescences, and produce a showy fruit about 15 cm in diameter. The fruit is inedible, and when broken, it exudes a milky sap, just like the branches.

It is native to the United States, specifically the region encompassing Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Its wood is very hard and durable; it has been used for posts, wagon wheels, and railroad ties. The Osage Indians of Missouri used it to make bows and war clubs; for this reason, it is commonly known as Bois d'arc (bow wood) or Osage orange. Dyes were extracted from its bark. The scientific name of the genus is dedicated to the American explorer William Maclure, a geologist who lived from 1763 to 1840. In La Concepción, there is a female specimen in the area around the Noria pond, near the conifer collection.

