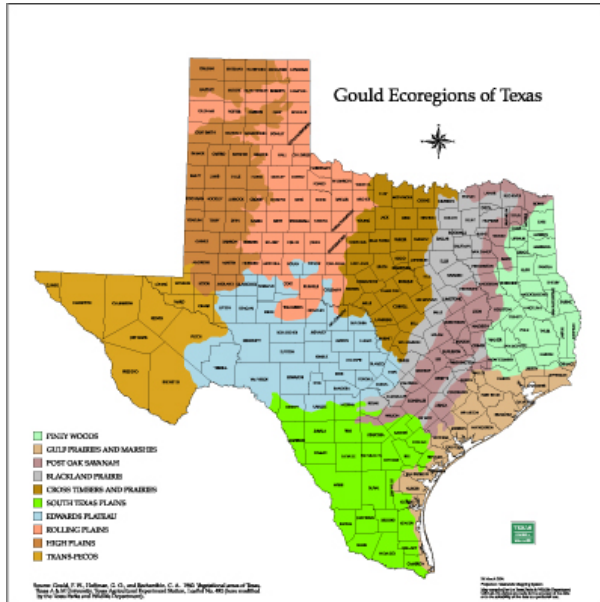


## CHAPTER 4

### SPECIES IDENTIFICATION

#### Common Local Native Species

While there is no definitive list of Central Texas trees, of the 4834 vascular plants that occur in Texas there are over one hundred species common to our region. Austin is divided into many geological surface regions with distinct plant communities.



The western (**Edwards Plateau**) side of Austin is characterized by rocky outcroppings and brushy vegetation. Native species common to this area are Plateau Live Oak, Juniper, Spanish Oak, Redbud, Mountain Laurel, and Shin Oak among others.

To the east we find the **Blackland Prairie**, characterized by black, heavy clay, "waxy" soil, and prairie grass species, and the **Post Oak Savannah**. Trees common to these regions are Post oak, Texas ash, Shin oak, and Cedar elm.

Where these regions collide, the **Balcones Escarpment**, other noteworthy species are

found, such as Texas redbud, Ashe juniper, Texas mulberry, Persimmon, Mountain laurel, and Texas buckeye.

In each of these regions we might find riparian corridors where Hackberry, Cedar elms, Cottonwood, Sycamore, Pecan, and Cypress predominate (*Shinners and Mahlers' Illustrated Flora of North Central Texas*).

However, our urbanized landscapes have been dramatically transformed by development. Many native species have been removed and replaced by non-native and/or invasive species. According to the recent survey by the Parks and Recreation Department, Crape myrtle, a popular non-native landscape tree, is the predominant street tree species. Species common to our region now include many other species introduced as landscape trees.



Hackberries planted by Shipe in Hyde Park subdivision, c. 1898.  
Source: Austin History Center.

## Austin's Trees

The Great Austin Tree Roundup maintains an online database of trees that are commonly found in Austin's Urban Forest ([www.treeroundup.org](http://www.treeroundup.org)). The Austin Trees tab links directly to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's Native Plant Database, and provides external links to additional sites. In addition, information on Texas trees, non-native species, and tree identification may be obtained at the following sites:

- Texas Forest Service - <http://texastreeid.tamu.edu/>
- Austin Arborist Home Page - <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/trees/encyclopedia.htm>
- USDA NRCS Plants Database - <http://plants.usda.gov>
- Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests - <http://www.invasive.org/eastern/srs/>

## Tree Identification

There are distinguishing characteristics that separate one tree species from another. By examining different tree parts you should be able to identify the different trees in your area. This requires some careful detective work, but it should be fun and easy.

Here are some clues that you will need to examine:

- TYPE – Deciduous or Conifer? Tree or a shrub? Determining these things starts you off on your way to tree identification.
- LEAF – Leaves are often the easiest way to identify most trees. Are the leaves arranged in an *opposite* or *alternate* pattern, *simple* or *compound*?
- BARK – Bark can be helpful for identifying some types of trees especially when they are in a winter condition.
- FRUIT – The wide variety of fruit types makes them useful when identifying trees.
- TWIG – You can actually tell a lot just by looking at the twig.
- FORM – The way a tree grows can tell you a great deal about a tree.

## Using a Guide

There are many good guides to Texas trees available from local bookstores like the Texas History Museum, the UT Museum of Natural History and the Wildflower Center Store.

If you encounter a species you cannot identify, collect a sample of a complete leaf and any other identifying part of the tree (fruit, seed, catkin, etc.) or take clear close-up photos to send to your satellite leader or the mapping contact team.