

Mexican Buckeye - *Ungnadia speciosa*

Mexican Buckeye deserves some attention simply because it is very easy to grow, easy to maintain, pest resistant/xeriscapic, and provides wonderful pink blossoms in the spring.

Mainly used as a small tree, it can be trained into a small, multi-trunked tree, (basal pruning in spring). Mature height and spread can reach 20 feet or more. Excellent as an understory tree, the Mexican buckeye can also be used as a specimen or ornamental tree. Since it's a big spreading plant, it makes an attractive tall background shrub or deciduous screen, but because of its spreading nature it is not well suited near the street. (Keep in mind that it is deciduous.)



The native habitat is west of the Brazos in the limestone soils of South, Central and West Texas, and up into Dallas County. However, this plant is very hardy and will tolerate most soils (alkaline-neutral) and summer heat as long as it doesn't sit in overly-saturated soil. And for those in deer areas, they tend to avoid the Mexican buckeye.



The Mexican buckeye leafs out in the spring along with the dark pink blooms, sometimes confused with the Eastern redbud. The leaves are pale green and lush by summer. The attractive seed pods follow the blooms. Mexican buckeye's round black somewhat shiny seeds are contained within a coarse, dark brown three-valved capsule that resembles buckeye (*Aesculus* spp.) seeds. However, the two species are not related.

The Mexican buckeye should not be confused with the Texas Buckeye *Aesculus glabra* var. *arguta*, which has white blooms that appear after the leaves are grown. Additionally, the Texas buckeye has a tendency to drop its leaves in mid-summer when in full sun and hot droughty conditions, due to leaf scorch and fungal disease. Therefore the Texas buckeye is not considered a desirable landscape plant.

Propagate with the seeds, which are easy to start.

Interesting tidbits:

- The genus is named after the baron David von Ungnad, 16th century Austrian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire.
- A word of caution, the black round seeds are poisonous and all parts of the tree are somewhat toxic

