

CAMPUS ARBORETUM



Focus on:
Maytenus phyllanthoides
"mangle dulce"
Celastraceae



Between February and May, Tucson, AZ experiences such a dramatic shift from very cold ($<20^{\circ}\text{F}$) to very hot ($>100^{\circ}\text{F}$). We mammals bundle up or find shelter indoors but the mangle dulce doesn't seem bothered at all. Even if it could relocate, I'm not sure it would. This long-lived desert adapted evergreen shrub looks a bit like a brighter green jojoba but grows taller (to 12 feet) and has more rounded or sometimes sports a distinctive mucronate (dented) leaf tip. The short petioles holding the leaf blade and the fleshy arils inside the fruit capsules have a striking reddish tint. This species is native to Mexico and Texas but has been distributed far afield of that range - throughout Mexico, Southeastern Florida, Texas, Cuba and the Bahamas.

To learn more, visit this Campus Arboretum Species Description page found at: <https://apps.cals.arizona.edu/arboretum/taxon.aspx?id=408>



Mangle dulce grows well in full sun or partial shade, is tolerant to various soil types, as well as to brackish/salty water and poorly drained sites. The plant requires low very low water most of the year in the southwestern US but, benefits from more regular irrigation in the hottest months. Its form is naturally rounded, so pruning for shape is not needed. Further, it is not known to be susceptible to any pests or diseases.

In landscapes, mangle dulce is used as a border, foundation planting, hedge or screen when planted in mass. In oasis or xeric landscapes, it serves as a good filler shrub that provides a brighter medium green to the more typical grey-green plants in southwest landscapes. It is very popular in native plant gardens in Florida and Texas but underutilized and less often grown in nurseries in the southwest. An Arizona nursery promotes the plant for use in large containers though, given its tolerance to many environmental conditions prevalent in Arizona, perhaps it deserves more attention in the landscapes throughout the american southwest.



Immature fruits look like miniature apples or mangos.



When the fruit matures, it splits open to reveal a fleshy red aril.

Ethnobotanical Uses:

Celastraceae species have a long tradition of use in folk medicine and agriculture with intensive research in modern times resulting in the isolation of a large number of bioactive secondary metabolites. In Mayo Ethnobotany, it reports the leaves of *Maytenus phyllanthoides* are used medicinally - when mixed with petroleum jelly, and applied to sores that will not heal, healing is reported. Others report that chewing on leaves alleviates stomach problems. Leaves have also been used as remedies for toothache and scurvy. A 2014 study showed this plant contains lyoniresinol the which has been demonstrated as an antitrichomonal agent (which are antiprotozoal agents that act on trichomonas parasites). This plant really packs a punch in an array of applications!



mangle dulce, I love you too!

Thanks for joining me on my journey to see and understand trees! The health of the planet and our fellow humans depends on respectful and understanding tree selection choices. I hope you're inspired to deepen the connection by visiting campus, and using the [interactive arboretum map](#) to find the tree featured in this spotlight for a more immersive education and sensory experience.



She sees trees

Enjoy!

Tanya

Tanya M. Quist, Ph.D.
Director, University of Arizona Campus Arboretum

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA CAMPUS ARBORETUM

P.O. Box 210036 Tucson, AZ 85721-0036

PHONE: (520) 621-1582

E-MAIL: infoarboretum@ag.arizona.edu

WEBSITE: <http://arboretum.arizona.edu>



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