

Prunus angustifolia



Name: *Prunus angustifolia*

Common name: Chickasaw plum

Hardiness: Zones 5b to 7a

Mature height: About 10 feet

Mature spread: 15 to 25 feet

Classification: Deciduous shrub

Landscape Use: Wildlife habitat for species of concern such as lesser prairie-chicken, painted bunting, and Bell's vireo; shrub rows in multi-row windbreaks; critical-area treatment plantings to control soil erosion

Ornamental Characteristics: Slender, glabrous leaves; numerous slender, zigzag twigs with smooth, reddish brown bark; off-white or yellowish white flowers; small, thin-skinned, red, orange-red or yellow fruit that is not glaucous but has a slight bloom

Chickasaw plum, also known as sand plum or sandhill plum, is a native shrub or low tree. It has a wide geographic area of distribution ranging from Maryland to Florida and westward to Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. It is found most commonly on sandy soils in pastures or open woods, along fence rows, and other disturbed sites. It frequently colonizes disturbed prairie sites and edges.

Prunus angustifolia was first cultivated about 1874 and long used by Native Americans and early settlers; horticulturists since have made numerous selections based on fruit characteristics. The first selection of Chickasaw plum was Caddo Chief found in the wild in Caddo Parish, La., and introduced by G. W. Stoner, Shreveport, La.

Chisholm Germplasm, a selected class plant material, was released in 2010 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service for conservation use in Kansas, Oklahoma and the Texas Panhandle. It can be used to enhance wildlife habitat for species of concern such as lesser prairie-chicken, painted bunting, and Bell's vireo; used as a shrub row in multi-row windbreaks; and critical area treatment plantings to control soil erosion.

Chisholm Germplasm Chickasaw plum is a short, thickly-branched shrub less than 10 feet tall, often forming extensive thickets or colonies due to extensive suckering. Leaves are lanceolate to oblong lanceolate, up to 2½ inches long and three-quarters of an inch wide; slender, lustrous, and glabrous above. Its numerous zigzag twigs are smooth, reddish brown and slender. Younger branches have smooth, reddish-brown bark with large, horizontal lenticels. Older trees have rough, scaly trunk bark.

There are short side twigs that bear flowers and end in sharp points. The numerous off-white or yellowish-white flowers with little fragrance appear before the leaves and are less than one-half inch across. The blooms are attractive to honey bees and other pollinator species. Open-pollinated, Chisholm blooms early in March to April. The fruits are small, thin-skinned, red, orange-red or yellow, not glaucous but with a slight bloom. Some trees bear edible fruits; others have very bitter fruits.

To propagate, seed should receive 60 to 120 days of moist cold treatment prior to spring sowing. Stratify in a sand-peat mixture with seeds thoroughly mixed with one to three times the volume of stratification medium between 36° and 41°F. Stratified seed should be monitored. Sow as early as possible in the spring. It is best if a high proportion of the seed has cracked stones, but the seeds should not have begun radial elongation as elongated radicals can be damaged in planting. A pre-treatment is not needed for fall sowing. Plant 15 to 20 seeds per square foot, 1 inch deep. Seedlings can be outplanted as 1-0 stock. Space plants 3 to 6 feet apart in windbreaks.

Protect from deer and rabbits while young. Though not heavily browsed by deer, young trees are often rubbed by the males in the fall.

Management depends on objectives of the planting. Weed control may be needed until seedlings are established. Tilling between the rows of plantings and hand weeding around the young trees is recommended. Consult your local county extension agent for herbicide recommendations. Once established, the plums should be able to fend for themselves. If fruit/seed production is the goal, then annual maintenance is required. In this case, fruit orchard management techniques should be employed.

Generation 2 seed is available to commercial growers from the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center (PMC), in Manhattan, Kan., to establish seed production orchards. Contact the Manhattan PMC (<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/kspmc/>) for a list of commercial vendors that handle Chisholm.

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