

Quail Masters Plant Profile

Know your plants; Know how to manipulate them



Netleaf Hackberry (*Celtis reticulata*)

One of the most common browse, or woody, species in west Texas, Netleaf Hackberry, a member of the Elm Family (*Ulmaceae*), is a staple in the diets of many of the domestic and wild animals in the region. The leaves are of high nutritional quality for deer, sheep, goats, cattle, antelope, and other foraging species. The seeds are eaten by songbirds, quail, turkey, deer, raccoons, and most other critters. This broad diversity of consumption is also its greatest asset in proliferation, as many of the seed pass through the digestive tracts, especially birds, and are deposited along fence rows, beneath other trees and shrubs, and from the eaves of structures such as barns and houses. From these deposits, the netleaf hackberry seeds germinate and start new plants. For many, this ability to multiply is seen as a detriment, because the trees seem to grow where homeowners don't want them. But from a wildlife and livestock point of view, it is a blessing to provide one of best wildlife food sources in west Texas.

Netleaf hackberry can be found in pastures as shrubs, the result of browsing by ruminants, or

as large trees, depending on the soil and moisture characteristics of the site. The leaves



are usually less than three inches long, egg shaped, generally broad with some serration (saw tooth) on edges, and have a rough texture on the upper surface. The veins on the underside of the leaves stand out and are readily visible.

Hackberry fruits are small, initially green in color, turning red to brown with maturity. Later they will dessicate (dry out) and the fruit shell will cling to the seed inside.



Two other species of hackberry also exist in Texas, the Sugar Hackberry (*C. laevigata*) which is found in east and south Texas, and Granjeno, or Desert Hackberry (*C. pallida*) which is found in south and far west Texas.

