

10 BUR OAK

(*Quercus macrocarpa*) This is an area of deeper, denser soil in a creek bed, resulting in bigger trees around you. The number sign points across the creek bed to a large Bur Oak. Bur Oaks are among the most massive trees with trunk diameters up to 9 feet. They thrive in moist areas such as this, but are very drought-resistant and can adapt to many environments. Bur Oaks are in the white oak group, with rounded lobe leaves that may be up to one foot long – look around you on the ground!

A Bur Oak can produce acorns for up to 400 years. Its acorns are the largest in North America, and can be up to two inches across with a fringed edge. They are a great food source for many animals and insects.

11 MUSTANG GRAPES

(*Vitis mustangensis*) This is a high-growing native vine, reaching to 30 or 40 feet, with small white flowers in the spring that precede the grapes. As opposed to many other types of vines, Mustang Grapes don't choke the trees on which they grow, but rather use them as a support. Coyotes, mockingbirds and cardinals like the fruit. The flowers attract bees and butterflies.

12 GREENBRIER (CATBRIER)

(*Smilax bona-nox*) This is a thorny vine, with heart-shaped, mottled leaves. If this rambling vine has something to support it, it will climb using its tendrils; otherwise, it will form a briar patch, which provides a protective shelter for small creatures like birds and rabbits. The tips of fresh greenbrier are edible, and the berries are a food source for at least 13 species of birds, as well as raccoons, squirrels, and opossums.

13 YUCCA

(*Yucca pallida* / *Yucca arkansana*) The yucca is actually in the agave family, and is not a type of cactus. There are many yucca species; the above two are found at the Preserve. The yucca prefers sunlight and is therefore often found at prairie edges. It sends up a stalk with cream-colored flowers which turn into seedpods.

14 POCKET PRAIRIE

This is one of many areas in the Preserve where a small patch of native Blackland prairie remains. The original prairie in this area included many native species of grasses, wildflowers, etc. Here you see Little Bluestem grass and yucca plants growing together. The wildflowers *Liatris* and Standing Cypress are seen in season.

15 CORALBERRY

(*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*) Coralberry is a great native plant often used in wildscape areas for habitat and color. The clusters of vivid coral-pink to purplish berries last through the winter months. The berries are a good food source for many birds, such as Cedar Waxwings and American Robins, and even Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

We hope you have enjoyed your guided stroll along the Possumhaw trail.

(To return to the parking lot, turn right at the fork opposite signpost 15, away from the Cattail Pond trail.)

Please return this trail guide to the Trailhead. Thank you!



Possumhaw Trail Guide

Welcome to Possumhaw Trail at Cedar Ridge Preserve. We hope you enjoy your stroll along this half-mile trail. When you finish, please leave this guide at the trailhead so others may benefit from it. Thanks!

1 POSSUMHAW HOLLY

(*Ilex decidua*) The namesake of the trail, the Possumhaw, is a deciduous holly. The female of the species has brilliant orange-red berries that outline the branches when the foliage drops in November or early December. These berries can last all winter if they don't get eaten first by the nine species of birds that enjoy them.

2 OSAGE ORANGE

(*Maclura pomifera*) This fascinating tree goes by a number of common names such as bodark (from the French 'Bois d'Arc', meaning 'wood of the bow'), horse apple, and others. The female is often recognized by its large green fruit with a rough exterior and a very milky interior. It is one of the favorite foods of squirrels, and chickadees eat the seeds from the discarded fruit.

The wood from this tree is very hard and durable, resistant to decay and impervious to termites. Notice the arched branches, which were prized by the Osage Indians for use in their highly valued bows, traded throughout the western U.S. Look for other osage orange trees along the trail, recognizable by their yellowish trunks, orange roots and thorns, if you don't see the telltale fruits.

3 SUGAR HACKBERRY

(*Celtis laevigata*) Sugar Hackberry grows across the eastern two thirds of Texas. It will grow in almost any type of soil, often with many plants together in a grove. The 'corky bark,' bumpy and raised, is an easy identifier. It also has teardrop-shaped leaves and reddish-brown fruits (called 'drupes') that are actually the seeds. They are sweet like a date outside, hard and starchy inside, and are high in sugar and protein. The Native Americans in this area gathered and ground them for pemmican (a sort of trail mix), with other berries and meats.

The fruits are a great food source for birds. And since they don't digest the seeds, they're always planting new hackberries along roads and fence lines where they roost.

4 MEXICAN PLUM

(*Prunus mexicana*) The Mexican plum is a beautiful, single-trunked small tree that has wonderful and fragrant beautiful spring flowers. Notice its curling, peeling bark. It often grows in groves or thickets, like you see here.

Many birds and mammals enjoy the dark red-purple fruit that ripens in the fall. Humans sometimes eat them raw or, more often, use them in jams and jellies.

5 EASTERN RED CEDAR

(*Juniperus virginiana*) At this point, you are entering a 'juniper forest.' There are two major types of junipers native to this area. This is an example of the Virginia juniper, more commonly known as Eastern Red Cedar. These evergreen, single-trunked, trees with Christmas tree shape have a flaky, brittle bark that is used by various species of birds for nest building. It produces small, bluish berries that are actually a type of cone. The wood has historically been used for pencils and arrows.

It is normal for this tree to drop the inner layer of foliage, which you may see on the ground around it. Cedars are known for repelling bugs, but also produce a chemical that keeps certain plants away, so there is usually not much undergrowth around these junipers.

Many species of birds such as chickadees, titmice and robins are known to use the bark for their nests.

6 ASHE JUNIPER

(*Juniperus ashei*) This site gives you a chance to compare two types of junipers: the Eastern Red Cedar, which you already know, and the Ashe Juniper. The Eastern Red Cedar is the tree to the immediate right front, and the two trees behind are Ashe Junipers. The Ashe junipers are often multi-trunked and unusually shaped, with bark that is much stringier, often shredding off in large strips. The Ashe Juniper 'berries' (cones) are also larger and darker purple.

Ashe Junipers are typically found in the western part of the state. Guess where Eastern Red Cedars are found! The Preserve is centrally located between the two regions, providing a meeting place for the two species.

As you walk to #7, try to distinguish between the red cedars and ashe junipers around you.

7 SHIN OAK

(*Quercus sinuata var. breviloba*) The Shin Oak (also known as the Bigelow Oak or "scrub oak") is in the white oak family, as seen in the rounded lobes of the leaves. The shin oak grows in small thickets in lighter soil, often growing to only 10 or 12 feet, but in better soils it may grow up to 40 feet tall. The pale, gray flaky bark on older trees can be a very distinguishing feature.

As you walk to #8, you will cross a small stream, an important source of water for the local wildlife. Climbing through the juniper forest, you will notice the trees are predominantly ashe juniper.

8 SHUMARD RED OAK

(*Quercus shumardii*) The Shumard Red Oak is one of the largest trees in the red oak family, and can grow up to a height of 120 ft. It prefers moist, bottomland soils and creek beds. The broad leaves have pointed lobes and usually turn a beautiful red color in the late fall.

It takes about 25 years for the Shumard Red Oak to produce acorns. But when it does, they provide a great food source for squirrels and other rodents.

- As you walk toward #9, note the small patch of prairie on your left. The common prairie grass found in the area is Little Bluestem, which appears bluish-gray in the summer/fall and turns a deep rust color in the winter/spring.

- As you approach the top of ridge you begin to see more evidence of Austin chalk, a signal that you are approaching the escarpment.

9 THE ESCARPMENT - AUSTIN CHALK

The escarpment at CRP is a large cliff area formed by a fault in the earth's surface and enhanced by erosion. It is composed primarily of limestone, deposited when the ocean that used to cover this area receded.

Note how the habitat changes as you descend from the ridge to the creek.