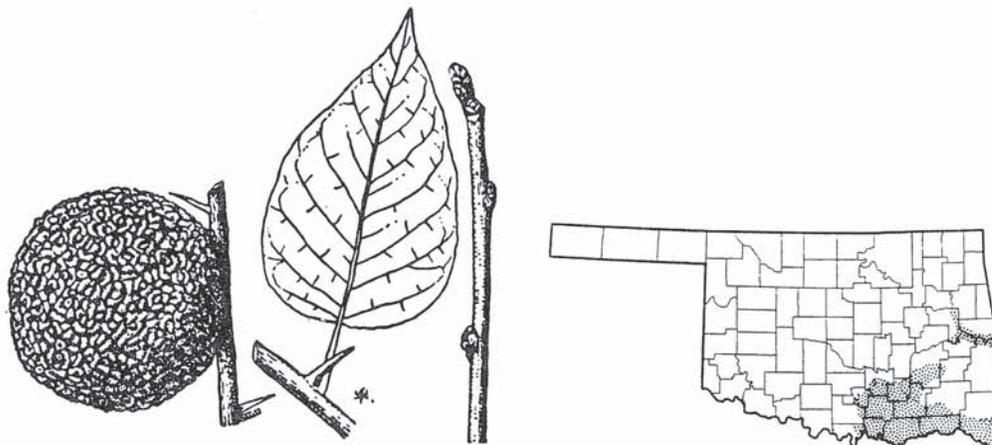


73. OSAGE-ORANGE

Maclura pomifera (Raf.) Schneid.; bodark, bois-d'arc, hedge-apple, hedge, horseapple.

Small to medium-sized spiny tree 40 ft (12 m) high, with short, often crooked trunk 1½ ft (0.5 m) in diameter, widespread rounded or irregular crown, and with whitish or *milky*, slightly bitter *sap*. Native, planted, and naturalized. **Twigs** stout, often zigzag, becoming hairless, light brown, with straight stout *spines* ¼-1 in (6-25 mm) long single at base of some leaves; many short side twigs or spurs. **Buds** small, rounded, partly hidden, light brown, with few scales hairy on edges; no end bud.



Leaves ovate, 2½-5 in (6-13 cm) long, 1½-3 in (4-7.5 cm) wide, with narrow long point, short-pointed to notched at base, *not toothed* on edges, hairless, *shiny dark green* above, paler beneath, turning yellow in autumn.

Flowers male and female on different trees in early spring, tiny, crowded, greenish; male in clusters (racemes) to 1½ in (4 cm) long; female in balls (heads) ¾-1 in (2-2.5 cm) in diameter.

Fruits (multiple) *large yellow green balls* 3½-5 in (9-13 cm) in diameter, heavy, hard, fleshy, resembling an orange in size and color, containing many light brown nutlets ¾ in (1 cm) long, maturing in autumn and soon falling.

Bark gray or brown, thick, deeply furrowed into narrow forking ridges; inner bark of roots *bright orange*, separating into thin papery layers.

Wood orange yellow to golden brown, turning brown on exposure, with thin light yellow sapwood, ring porous, fine-textured, very heavy (sp. gr. .80), very hard, very strong and stiff, resistant to decay and durable. Used for fenceposts, insulator pins, machinery parts.

Scattered as native in moist soil, flood plain and valley forests, Coastal Plain and Red River valley of se. Okla. w. to Arbuckle Mts., also Ark. River valley of e. Okla. w. to Muskogee Co. Widely planted for hedges, fences, shelterbelts, windbreaks, ornament, and shade in c. and w. Okla. and naturalized through Okla. except panhandle. Extensively cultivated in e. and nw. U.S. and escaped and naturalized, common locally in valleys. Native from sw. Ark. to e. Okla. and Trans-Pecos Texas, the original limits uncertain. Zone 5.

More than a century ago, before invention of barbed wire, rows of these spiny trees served as fences in the grassland plains. The Osage Indian use for archery bows is retained in the common name bodark or bowdarc from the French bois d'arc, meaning bow-wood. Another use was war clubs. Other common names refer to the large, inedible fruits. The root bark formerly was the source of a dye to make cloth a khaki color, while bark of the trunks was used in tanning leather.

The map indicates the probable natural distribution before planting and naturalization through the state.