

WISE WATER WORDS

Hello Fellow Master Gardeners.

I hope this finds all of you enjoying this beautiful fall weather.

This month, I would like to share with you several links that can help with identification of trees. As Master Gardeners, we are often asked by friends and neighbors to identify specific trees. While some of these trees are very obvious, such as Crape myrtle, Sycamore, or Live Oak, many trees can be hard to distinguish. In addition, differentiating between a Texas Sycamore and a Mexican Sycamore, or Shumard Oak and Texas Red Oak can be challenging. It is important for us to give correct information using academic references, and I've found the following websites to be useful.

I have been researching different genus and species of trees recently and we have a lot of information from Texas A&M AgriLife posted in our own digital Gardening Library (<http://www.bexarmg.org>). I have also found that the Texas A&M Forest Service website, (<http://texastreeid.tamu.edu/>), is easy to use and gives clear and concise information to help with identification. Another great tool for tree identification is from Stephen F. Austin State University. (<http://forestry.sfasu.edu/faculty/stovall/dendrology/index.php>). This site has photo fact sheets for the trees and other woody plants with several close up pictures of leaves, branches, buds, bark, etc. for each specific plant or tree. There are also fun quizzes to test your knowledge.

The science and study of woody plants, (trees, shrubs and some vines) specifically their taxonomic classifications, is called *dendrology*. The focus is on learning how to identify these plants using their leaves, branches, bark, buds, flowering structures, growth patterns and form. The botanical names (aka, Latin or scientific) and common names are learned as well. These botanical names are used so that one name is understood around the world for a particular plant or plant family. There are many common names used for one plant, which can be confusing. When the botanical name is used, however, that name is specific to one type of plant. As Master Gardeners, we should be familiar with both botanical names and common names of the plants in our region of Texas.

I hope you get a chance to visit these sites and our digital library to see all the references we have to help us with properly identifying specific trees and shrubs. This should help the next time a friend or neighbor brings you one of those "Can you tell me what this is...?" types of questions.

Conservationally yours,

Anna Vogler
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Bexar County Master Gardeners