

When the seedlings are large enough to handle, they can be transferred to big pots in the winter. Then, after the last frost in the spring, they can be planted.

When choosing a site to plant Red Mulberry, take into consideration the messy fruits. It often causes staining of sidewalks and driveways. Also, it needs to be planted in a large space, because of its spreading crown.

Pests and Diseases

Red Mulberry is generally free of pests and diseases. Sometimes witches broom will occur. This is caused by a mite and powdery mildew. It does not kill the tree; it just makes the tree unattractive. The main symptom is clusters of abnormally short twigs, which are scattered throughout the tree crown. Pruning out the clusters will help with its appearance. In the Gulf South tent caterpillars will infest Red Mulberry.



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For More Information Contact:



Nicholls State University
Camls State University Campus
P.O. Box 2663
Thibodaux, LA 70310
Phone: 1-800-259-0869



Golden Meadows Plant Materials Center
438 Airport Road
Galliano, LA 70354
Phone: (985) 475-5280
Fax: (985) 475-6545

For more information about other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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RED MULBERRY

Morus rubra L.

For Coastal Wetlands



USDA-NRCS

G. Edward Alexander, Jr.



Dr. Malcolm Vidrine, LSU

Helping People Help the Land...

June 2008



WHY RED MULBERRY?

Red Mulberry is a small, fast growing, native tree found throughout Louisiana in a variety of conditions. But it is mostly found in moist soils of hardwood forests. There are two other species of mulberries found in Louisiana (Black Mulberry and White Mulberry), but they are introduced. Red Mulberry is the only native mulberry in Louisiana. It sometimes hybridizes with White Mulberry.

Red Mulberry was first described in 1753. It is a good shade tree that is planted as an ornamental because the most important feature of Red Mulberry is its fruit. The fruits appear from April to June and resemble blackberries. It is a favorite wildlife food, especially songbirds like the chestnut-sided warbler, gray checked thrush, Swainson's thrush, Tennessee warbler, scarlet tanager, and veery. The fruits are also edible for humans, if there are any leftovers from the birds. They can be used the same way as blackberry-jams, jellies, plain, wines, etc. In the past, it was used to fatten the



Jeff Trahan

hogs and as poultry food.

The leaves and twigs provide browse for white-tailed deer and livestock. Also, the

leaves provide larval food for two butterflies- mourning cloak and red admiral.



Dr. Malcolm Vidrine, LSUE

The wood is light, soft, weak, close-grained, and durable. It had been used for fence posts, farm implements, cooperage, furniture, interior finish, and caskets. Indians used the inner bark to make ropes, thread, and woven cloth.

Description

Red Mulberry is a small to medium-sized deciduous tree that reaches a height of 70 feet and lives up to 125 years. The bark is dark, reddish brown with flat and broad ridges that peel easily in long, narrow flakes. The leaves are alternate, simple, and unlobed, lobed, or mitten-shaped. It is rough hairy



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above and soft hairy below. The flowers are small, green, and in clusters. The flowers are of two kinds (male or female), on the same or different trees. The fruits are up to 1 1/2 inches long and first appear green, then red (hence *rubra*), and finally deep purple.

Propagation and Establishment

There are no known cultivars or varieties that are originally from Louisiana available and not many nurseries have Red Mulberry in stock. However, Red Mulberry can easily be propagated by seed or by cuttings.

Fruit production begins when the trees are 4 to 10 years old. They will continue to produce fruit when they are 30 to 85 years old. Good seed crops are produced every 2 to 3 years. Mature fruits can be picked from the trees from April to June. Seeds can be planted immediately without stratification or in the spring after 30 to 90 day stratification in the refrigerator. The seeds should be planted 8 to 12 inches apart. The average germination rate for Red Mulberry is 12 to 50 percent.



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