

**Possumhaw** – Reprinted from Friends of Hagerman NWR Weekly Blog, January 11, 2018

Have you seen this bright berried deciduous tree or shrub that just stands out in the winter landscape? It is *Ilex decidua* - commonly known by a number of names - Possumhaw, Possumhaw Holly, Deciduous Holly, Meadow Holly, Prairie Holly, Swamp Holly, Welk Holly, Deciduous yaupon, Bearberry, Winterberry.



According to the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center website, "Opossums, raccoons, other mammals, songbirds, and gamebirds eat the fruit of this and related species." The spring blooms of the Possumhaw also provide nectar for insects and the horizontal branches offer a platform for birds' nests.



From the Texas Native Plants Database: "Possumhaw is a large shrub or small tree frequently encountered in or near seasonally wet areas in Central and East Texas. Fairly nondescript in summer, female plants with their red, orange, or yellow fruit can become a blaze of color in the fall and winter landscape. It is the widest ranging of all Texas hollies and can adapt to a wide range of soil conditions. It can be grown in shade, but it fruits best in partial shade to full sun. Females need a male pollinator for good fruit set.



The Ladybird site notes that Possumhaws can grow to 36' in height, while TAMU says 10' -12', occasionally 20', and 6' - 10' in width. It is native within a "box" formed along the East Coast from Virginia to Florida, from Virginia to westward to Kansas and down to Texas and in the states in between.

Watch for Possumhaw this winter as you walk the trails at Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge.

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