

THE BIG NEWS

Little Big Tree

We usually think of a champion tree as something massive, like the “General Sherman” sequoia in California. But some of our champs come in smaller packages. Take the dwarf hackberry (*Celtis tenuifolia*), for instance. This diminutive cousin of the sugarberry occurs infrequently in north and east Texas on rocky or dry, gravelly soils. It usually grows to about 25 feet in height and has small, triangular-shaped leaves and the warty bark that identifies it as one of the hackberries.

While thinning underbrush of juniper and greenbriar from a grove of hardwood trees, Master Naturalist Gregg Lee found what turned out to be a new Texas record for this species, measuring 25 inches in circumference, 22 feet tall, with a spread of 28 feet. But the hard part was confirming he had the right species. “I could see from the bark and leaves that it was obviously a hackberry,” said Lee. “Later, I realized that this hackberry’s leaves were much smaller and a different shape from sugarberry (*Celtis laevigata*) or netleaf hackberry (*Celtis reticulata*).” Lee researched the leaf, fruit, twig, and bark characteristics of all three species using several online resources (<http://plants.usda.gov>; <http://www.efloras.org>) and then nominated his tree for the big tree registry. Having no other nominations on file, his tree became an instant champ!



From left: (1) Gregg Lee standing behind the new state champion dwarf hackberry (*Celtis tenuifolia*); (2) mature leaves; (3) autumn leaves against background of one-inch squares; (4) mature fruit; (5) new leaves and flowers.

Spring Has Sprung

If you happen to be out-of-doors on one of these precious (few) spring days, keep a watchful eye for those tree species that spend most of the year hidden in the background, noticed only for a few days or weeks each year when they come into flower. There are currently no state champions for silky camellia (*Stewartia malacodendron*), dwarf pawpaw (*Asimina parviflora*), flatwoods plum (*Prunus umbellata*), Utah serviceberry (*Amelanchier utahensis*), and all three species of snowbells (*Styrax spp.*).... The next one you find could be a champion!

Quarterly List Published

TFS publishes the latest Texas Big Tree Registry quarterly, at <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/>. Here’s a snapshot of the new champs or co-champs crowned since January 1, 2007:

Species	Cir.	Height	Spread	Tree Index	County	Owner
Buckeye, Red	35	23	31	66	Dallas	Terry Sobey
Cherry, Black	137	62	57	213	Nacogdoches	City of Nacogdoches
Hackberry, Dwarf (Georgia)	25	22	28	54	Somervell	Gregg & Carol Lee

In Memorium

Some champs haven’t been inspected since they were discovered. A recent search in the Dallas area for state champions common pear (*Pyrus communis*) and smooth sumac (*Rhus glabra*) turned up empty. With no replacement on file, those species now have no champion. If you know of a candidate specimen, fill out a nomination form or contact the program coordinator at bigtrees@tfs.tamu.edu.