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Curl-leaf Mountain Mahogany in the Landscape

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Cercocarpus ledifolius

Curl-leaf mountain mahogany



Description: Curl-leaf mountain mahogany is a marvelous large shrub to small tree that would look good in any ornamental landscape, but is especially adapted for low-water landscapes. It is the only broadleaf evergreen tree in the Intermountain West, and as such it offers an interesting winter contrast to the standard landscape conifer. It achieves a rather gnarly and quite intriguing shape with age. Seeds have long, cork-screw, feather-like plumes that cover the tree, creating an almost fuzzy appearance from a distance. The leaves are distinctively aromatic, evergreen and, curled under, thus its common name.

Cultural Requirements:

- Native habitat Dry hills and rocky slopes throughout the West at elevations from 5,000 to 10,000 feet
- Soil Well drained, tolerates poor soil conditions; prefers coarse, rocky slopes; pH 6.0 to 9.0
- Cold Tolerance Zones 3-8
- Drought Tolerance High
- Salt Tolerance Unknown
- Sun/Shade Preference Full sun to part shade
- Transplanting Deep tap root makes it difficult to transplant
- Propagation Seed or hardwood stem cuttings
- Maintenance Prune in winter; tolerates hedging or shearing
- Problems Browsed by deer

Landscape Value:

- Use in the Landscape Use as a screen or for reclamation, soil stabilization, cover for wildlife; becomes multi-stemmed as a seedling; it needs training to achieve a single-trunk tree form.
- Leaves Broadleaf evergreen; shiny, dark green and leathery
- Flowers Small, inconspicuous, pale rose

| | Apr | May | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct |
|---------|-----|-----|------|------|-----|------|-----|
| • Color | | | | | | | |

- Fruit (seedheads) Long, dry achene with a 2- to 3-inch plume attached
- Form Upright shrubby
- Texture Coarse
- Ultimate Size 8 to 15 feet
- Rate of Growth Slow
- Plant Community Parkland, pinyon-juniper, shrub steppe, mountain brush
- Availability Utah's Choice selection (visit <http://www.utahschoice.org/natives/wheretobuy> for more information)
- Cultivars None of ornamental value

Propagation

To start seed indoors soak seed in hydrogen peroxide for up to 24 hours. Rinse well. Cold, moist stratify for 30 to 60 days. Sow seed into container and cover with ¼ inch soil. To sow seed outdoors, use a generous amount of seed and cover with ¼ inch of soil. Sow in fall and watch for germinated seedlings the following spring. Cuttings should be collected in the spring from the previous season's growth.

Additional Photos



Photo credits: Roger Kjelgren

References

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