



Texas Ebony
Ebenopsis ebano

Secondary Names:
Ebony Blackbead, Ebano, Ebony Apes-Earring

Leaf Type: Evergreen
Texas Native:
Firewise:



Tree Description:
A thorny shrub up to a medium-sized tree, 40 feet tall and a trunk to 2 feet in diameter, with thick, spreading branches that form a dense, dark green crown of foliage.

Range/Site Description:
This important component of the native South Texas brushland plant community occurs from Aransas Bay southward to the Rio Grande Valley and into Mexico.

Leaf:
Alternate, double-compound, about 2" long and 3" wide, with 2 to 4 pairs of pinnae and no terminal leaf or leaflet; each pinna has 3 to 5 pairs of leathery, dark green, evergreen leaflets, shiny on top and paler beneath, about 0.25" to 0.33" long.

Flower:
A dense, cylindrical spike of flowers, 1" to 1.5" long on a stalk 0.75" long, light yellow or cream-colored, fragrant, blooming from June to August.

Fruit:
A large, curved, somewhat flattened, hairy pod, 4" to 6" long and about 1" wide, dark brown or black, appearing in the fall and remaining on the branches until after the flowering season the following year.

Bark:
The branchlets are stout, form a zigzag pattern, and are armed with persistent paired spines at the nodes, 0.25" to 0.5" long. Bark is gray, turning very dark black and rough with age.

Wood:
Wood is heavy, hard, close-grained, dark red-brown tinged with purple, almost indestructible when used for fence posts, and valued for cabinet work. Seeds can be roasted and eaten, or polished and strung into jewelry.

Similar Species:
Wright acacia (*Acacia greggii* var. *wrightii*) has slender branchlets and catclaw thorns.

Interesting Facts:
The border town of Los Ebanos, Texas, is named for the ebony tree that serves as an anchor for the last hand-pulled ferry across the Rio Grande.