

## Wild Plum and Chickasaw Plum

### Wild Plum

Commonly growing as large, dense, thorny thickets with smooth grey bark, the wild plum can grow to a tree up to 15 feet (4,5 m) high with a main stem up to 8 inches (20 cm) in diameter. It is found near streams and in moist ground, in the eastern foothills up to 6000 feet (1800 m) elevation, and across the northeastern plains. Both thickets and trees produce masses of white flowers in May before the leaves appear. In fall the edible fruit ripens, the largest native tree fruit of Colorado.

In fall black bears scour the plum thickets seeking plums to eat. Since the coming of the earliest pioneers the wild plum has been used in jams, jellies, and pies. Some wild plums were planted or transplanted by early settlers and more recent residents.

### Wild Plum Identification:

Leaves: 2 to 3 ½ inch (5 to 8 cm) long and 1 to 1¾ inch (2.5 to 4.5 cm) wide, pointed, toothed, sometimes doubly toothed.

Flowers: White, about an inch across; very early blooming, before leaves, usually in early May.

Fruit: ¾ inch to 1 inch (18 to 25 mm) diameter; frosted purple, blue, reddish, or yellow; edible, with a flat seed inside.

Bark: thin or up to ½ inch (12 mm) thick, gray with faint whitish lenticels (horizontal marks), occasionally dark brown with reddish tinge; dark gray and rough or plate-like on older trees.

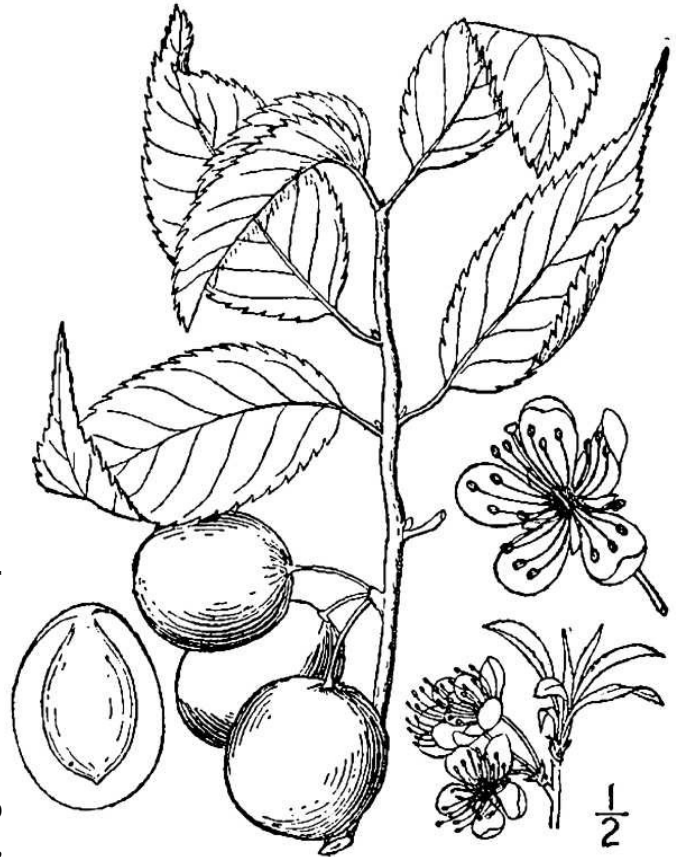
The botanical name is *Prunus americana* H. Marshall.

### Related plants:

Chickasaw plum (*Prunus angustifolia* H. Marshall) is a similar plant whose natural range extends from area southeast of Colorado into the southeastern corner of Colorado. Its leaves are smaller, only 1 to 2 inches (2.5 to 5 cm) long, and narrow; the flowers are only about one-third of an inch (8 mm) across.

*Prunus gracilis* Engelman & Gray

*Prunus rivularis* Scheele (Baca County: Upper Carrizo Creek, Weber 1991).



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Wild plum, *Prunus americana*, Colorado

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Chickasaw Plum, *Prunus angustifolia*.

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Drawings: USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Vol. 2: 324, 323.