

Osage Orange (*Maclura pomifera*)

The Osage Orange belongs to the Moraceae, or mulberry family. The name *Maclura pomifera* comes from William Maclure (1763 – 1840) an early American geologist; and *pomifera* which means “fruit-bearing” for the large fruits that it produces on the female trees. It is a small to medium size tree that can grow to 90 feet tall, with deeply furrowed bark and thorny branches. The trunk is usually short and divides into several prominent limbs with upward arching branches. The root system is diffuse and covers large areas with its lateral spread. Leaves are deciduous, simple, and alternate or are in clusters at the end of short spurs.

The Osage Orange has a long and interesting history of use by both Native Americans and early pioneers. Its wood was once in demand for making hubs and wheel rims for horse drawn wagons, mine support timbers, posts and many other uses where decay resistance was important. Osage orange was first cultivated in the south in the early 1800's. e. By the 1850's Osage orange hedges made the fencing of entire farms possible. The French found the Osage Indians making bows from the wood and called it Bois d'Arc (meaning wood of the bow). Recently, Osage orange has been studied for the chemical properties it contains that may be of economic importance. Oil extracted from the seeds has been tested for its potential as biodiesel.

Due to the large size of the fruit and the thorns, the Osage Orange is not suitable as an urban forest tree.