

Bird Friendly Native Plant of the Month

JUNE 2016

NC NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

REEDY CREEK NATURE PRESERVE



Prunus with Tiger Swallowtail
Photo by Will Stuart



Prunus angustifolia Chickasaw Plum

Food and Shelter

Chickasaw Plum offers many services to our wildlife friends. The rambling and sometimes thorny hedgerows shelter bobwhite, thrasher, catbirds and mocking birds. The shrubby trees are also excellent larval host plants for swallowtail, hairstreak, and admiral butterflies.

Chickasaw Plum fruits are more often relished by wildlife than people. The plum fruits are a bit sour for our modern taste, unless you can wait until they are fully red or orange. There is evidence that Chickasaw Indians also consumed the fresh fruits and used the dried fruits in winter. The fruits have also historically been used to make jams, jellies and wines.

If you do want to produce Chickasaw Plum fruit, be sure to plant two or more individual

Wildlife habitat...what do they need?

Places to nest, places to hide, places to roost and food to eat. A Chickasaw Plum hedge provides all of this for a variety of birds and small mammals. The thorny brambles that are inhospitable to humans are also a deterrent to predators such as hawks and cats.

plants in close proximity to achieve cross pollination.

Plum Choices

While we have several native plums, Chickasaw Plum might be the desirable selection for your landscape. Chickasaw Plum is

typically longer lived and more attractive than its cousin, American Plum, *Prunus americana*.

Plant Chickasaw Plum in full sun, and it will grow to about 10 feet tall. Being deciduous, Chickasaw Plum is lovely in early spring in full flower before the leaves develop. Chickasaw Plums tend to form spreading colonies and are drought tolerant once established. They can be used to stabilize a stream bank or gully.

Chickasaw Plum could be an alternative to invasive exotic Bradford Pear trees, if you are focusing on wildlife benefits. The form of the two trees is quite different—Chickasaw Plum is a rambling hedge compared to the tree form of Bradford Pear.

Bird Friendly Native Plant of the Month is a joint effort of the NC Native Plant Society and Audubon North Carolina.

