

Celtis laevigata

[Synonyms : *Celtis berlandieri*, *Celtis georgiana*, *Celtis integrifolia*, *Celtis laevigata* var. *anomala*, *Celtis laevigata* var. *brachyphylla*, *Celtis laevigata* var. *smallii*, *Celtis laevigata* var. *texana*, *Celtis mississippiensis*, *Celtis occidentalis* var. *georgiana*, *Celtis pumila* var. *georgiana*, *Celtis smallii*, *Celtis tenuifolia*, *Celtis tenuifolia* var. *georgiana*, *Celtis tenuifolia* var. *soperi*]

MISSISSIPPI HONEYBERRY is a deciduous tree. Native to south-eastern North America it has small greenish flowers and leaves that turn yellow in Autumn.

It is also known as African false elm, American celtis, *Bois inconnu* (French), Common hackberry, Dwarf hackberry, Georgia hackberry, Hackberry, Lowland hackberry, Mississippi hackberry, Mississippi sugarberry, Southern hackberry, Sugarberry, Sugar hackberry, *Suikernetelboom* (Dutch), Texas hackberry, Texas sugarberry, and Upland hackberry.

The flowers are pollinated by bees and the seeds are dispersed by birds and water.

Laevigata is derived from Latin *levis* (smooth) meaning ‘smooth or polished’.

For both the Seminole and Comanche North American Indian tribes Mississippi honeyberry provided food. The latter beat the fruit to a pulp and this was then mixed with fat and roasted.

It also offered an unusual tool for the Seminole tribe who according to authorities used it to make ‘squirting’ tubes which could be invaluable for directing, say, medicines accurately.

The Houma Indians put the plant’s bark to medicinal use for easing sore throats and treating venereal disease.

The orange-red ripening to purple-black fruit are eaten locally today, raw or cooked.

Many song and game birds enjoy the fruit, including waterfowl, pheasant, quail, grouse and turkeys. They are also eaten to a certain extent by squirrels and other non-game or game animals, including some deer – and some authorities record that cattle will browse on the tree significantly in Winter when there is little else to choose from.

The tree is grown both as a street and shade tree. It is cultivated as an ornamental plant too.

Its soft, light yellow wood has been used for veneering, manufacturing plywood, and making barrels, crates and agricultural implements. Most especially though it has been used to make cheap furniture for which it is often known as Hackberry. It has also been used for flooring, fencing and fuel.