

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

Illness is a part of life; every living thing is susceptible to disease, and of course, humans are no exception. For as long as people have gotten sick, they have tried to find cures and remedies for their ailments. Before modern hospitals and commercial pharmaceutical drugs, people turned to natural resources in their local environments for treatment. But the proliferation of modern medicine has not rendered older medicinal practices obsolete. In fact, in many parts of the world, traditional medicine remains the primary method of healing disease.

Local flora are generally a fundamental element of traditional medicine. One plant that has widespread medicinal use across many different cultures is *Ximenia americana*. Known in English by many names, such as hog plum and tallow wood (Atlas of Florida Plants), this plant is described as a shrub or small tree a few meters in height, ranging from dark brown to pale gray in color (Keefelegn & Desta, 2021).

Its leaves can be lanceolate or elliptic, and its small, almost hairlike flowers are often white, yellow-green, or pink in color. It produces an oval-shaped fruit that is yellow when ripe (Keefelegn & Desta, 2021).



Scott Zona (Wildflower Search), 2018

Ximenia americana has a wide distribution and can be found in several continents, including Asia, Australia, Africa, and the Americas (Useful Tropical Plants Database). Cultures from each of these continents utilize the plant for different purposes; however, its primary use is medicinal. Among the Yucatec Maya in Tabi, Yucatan, *Ximenia americana* is used to treat diarrhea (Hopkins & Stepp, 2012). In Ethiopia, the plant is used to treat a multitude of ailments, from hepatitis to parasite infestations (Keefelegn & Desta, 2021). In Brazil, it is used for cicatrizing (or scar forming), as an astringent and as a remedy for excessive menstruation, as well as a treatment for ulcers and as a laxative (Monte et al., 2012). These are just a few examples of the extensive medicinal capabilities of this species and its importance in traditional medicine worldwide.



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Works Cited

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