

# Trees of Young Park

## Las Cruces, New Mexico



**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE • GUIDE H-429**



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(COVER IMAGE: Chinese juniper needles and fruit by F.D. Richards, flickr.com.)

# Trees of Young Park

## Las Cruces, New Mexico

Young Park, located at 1905 E. Nevada Ave. in Las Cruces, NM, is home to many tree species. You can use this guide, along with the trees found in Young Park, to help you learn about tree identification. Examine each tree's leaves, bark, and shape. Each of the described trees can be found with the location map (Figure 1). A glossary at the end of this guide defines many terms related to plant identification.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**Check out the following resources to learn more about tree identification and tree species in your area.**

Arbor Day Foundation. 2019. What tree is that? [Online]. Available at <https://www.arborday.org/trees/whattree/fullonline.cfm>

Petrides, G.A., and O. Petrides. 1998. *A field guide to western trees: Western United States and Canada*, 2nd edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

St. Hilaire, R. 2018. *Landscape plants for the lower Rio Grande basin*. Austin: Sentia Publishing.

Tree Plotter. 2019. New Mexico Treeplotter inventory [Online]. Available at <https://pg-cloud.com/NewMexico/>



## Number/Common Name

- |                           |                         |                          |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Crape myrtle           | 13. Chaste tree         | 25. Chinese pistache     |
| 2. Texas mountain laurel  | 14. London plane tree   | 26. Italian cypress      |
| 3. Arizona sycamore       | 15. Chinese juniper     | 27. Callery pear         |
| 4. Texas red oak          | 16. Crabapple           | 28. Pecan                |
| 5. American sycamore      | 17. Italian stone pine  | 29. New Mexico olive     |
| 6. Gambel oak             | 18. Lacebark elm        | 30. Honey locust         |
| 7. Chinquapin oak         | 19. Desert willow       | 31. Arizona cypress      |
| 8. Rocky Mountain juniper | 20. Mexican white oak   | 32. Lanceleaf cottonwood |
| 9. Japanese black pine    | 21. Mulberry            | 33. Nettleleaf hackberry |
| 10. Bur oak               | 22. Southern live oak   | 34. Mexican sycamore     |
| 11. Afghan pine           | 23. California fan palm | 35. Cedar elm            |
| 12. Raywood ash           | 24. Arizona ash         |                          |

**Figure 1.** Tree locations within Young Park, Las Cruces, NM. Tree numbers are ordered as they appear in the guide. Aerial imagery from Google Earth.



1. **Crape myrtle** (*Lagerstroemia indica*)

**Leaf:** Opposite, simple, short petioles, dark green, 1–2.5 in. (2.5–6.3 cm) long

**Fall color:** Red, red-orange, yellow

**Flower color and season:** White, pink, red, purple; summer

**Key ID characteristics:** Short stature with pie-shaped seed pods and smooth gray or light brown peeling bark that reveals a pinkish inner bark

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2. **Texas mountain laurel**

(*Sophora secundiflora*;

**Figure 2)**

**Leaf:** Alternate, odd pinnate compound leaf with three to five pairs of 1–2 in. (2.5–5 cm) long oval-shaped leaflets

**Fall color:** Evergreen

**Flower color and season:**

Purple; early spring

**Key ID characteristics:**

Light gray pubescent seed pods, short stature, evergreen



**Figure 2.** Texas mountain laurel seed pods (photo by S. Shebs, Wikimedia Commons).

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3. **Arizona sycamore**  
(*Platanus wrightii*; **Figure 3)**

**Leaf:** Alternate and simple, pubescent, 6–9 in. (15.2–22.8 cm) long, with three to five deep lobes

**Fall color:** Golden brown

**Flower color and season:**

Green; late spring

**Key ID characteristics:** The fruits are stalked, spikey seed balls in clusters of one to four; bark is smooth and flaking, mottled gray to white in color



**Figure 3.** Arizona sycamore fruits may occur in clusters of one to four (photo by L. Seaton, Wikimedia Commons).

4. **Texas red oak**

(*Quercus buckleyi*; Figure 4)

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, 2.5–5.5 in. (6.3–14 cm) long and 2–4 in. (5–10.1 cm) wide, with three to five sharply pointed lobes

**Fall color:** Red-brown

**Flower color and season:** Yellow-green (male), red-brown (female); spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Light brown scaly bark when young, dark gray bark with scales and deep fissures at maturity; acorns are egg-shaped, reddish-brown, 0.75 in. (1.9 cm) long, top one-third covered by a cup-shaped cap



**Figure 4.** Texas red oak acorns (photo by D. Goldman, hosted by USDA–NRCS PLANTS Database).

5. **American sycamore**

(*Platanus occidentalis*; Figure 5)

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, serrated margin, pubescent veins, 4–8 in. (10.2–20.3 cm) wide, medium green

**Fall color:** Yellow-brown

**Flower color and season:** Red; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Fruits occur singly; bark smooth and flaking, with mottled creamy white colors



**Figure 5.** American sycamore fruits occur singly (photo by W.D. Brush, hosted by USDA–NRCS PLANTS Database).

6. **Gambel oak (*Quercus gambelii*; Figure 6)**

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, 3–7 in. (7.6–17.8 cm) long, oblong with seven to nine deep smooth lobes, dark green above, pale green and densely hairy beneath

**Fall color:** Yellow to reddish orange

**Flower color and season:** Yellow/green; early spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Bark is gray and rough, acorn is about 1 in. (2.5 cm) with a cap covering about 1/3 of nut, shrubby growth habit can form thickets



**Figure 6.** Gambel oak leaves and acorns (photo by C. Maylett, Wikimedia Commons).

7. Chinquapin oak

(*Quercus muehlenbergii*; Figure 7)

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, oblong shape, 4–6 in. (10.2–15.2 cm) long, shiny green upper surface, course shallow teeth each ending in a small point

**Fall color:** Yellow, orange, burgundy

**Flower color and season:** Yellow-green; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Light gray scaly bark, prominent veins on leaf underside



Figure 7. Chinquapin oak leaves (photo by B. Kirchoff, Wikimedia Commons).

8. Rocky Mountain juniper

(*Juniperus scopulorum*; Figure 8)

**Leaf:** Scale-like, pressed closely to branches, 0.13 in. (0.3 cm) long, gray to blue-green

**Fall color:** Evergreen

**Flower color and season:** Yellowish; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Round, waxy, blue berry-like cones less than 0.5 in. (1.3 cm) in size



Figure 8. Berries and leaves of Rocky Mountain juniper (photo by T. Tuason, Wikimedia Commons).

9. Japanese black pine

(*Pinus thunbergii*; Figure 9)

**Leaf:** Two needles per fascicle, 3–5 in. (7.6–12.7 cm) long, stiff, slightly twisted, dark green

**Fall color:** Evergreen

**Flower color and season:** Reddish; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Twisted shape to tree, white to silky white candle-like buds



Figure 9. Candle-like buds on a Japanese black pine (photo by D.J. Stang, Wikimedia Commons).

10. **Bur oak** (*Quercus macrocarpa*;  
Figure 10)

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, 8–10 in. (20.3–25.4 cm) long with five to seven deeply cut and rounded lobes

**Fall color:** Yellow-brown

**Flower color and season:** Green; late spring to early summer

**Key ID characteristics:** A large 1–1.5 in. (2.5–3.8 cm) cap with a burred fringe covers the acorn, one very deeply cut lobe near leaf center



*Figure 10. Bur oak leaves and acorn (photo by USDA–NRCS PLANTS Database / Herman et al. [1996], North Dakota tree handbook).*

11. **Afghan pine** (*Pinus eldarica*)

**Leaf:** Two needles per fascicle, thin, twisted, 5–6 in. (12.7–15.2 cm) long, green to blue-green

**Fall color:** Evergreen

**Flower color and season:** Yellow; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Pyramidal shape to tree, long needle length, 1–3 in. (2.5–7.6 cm) long cones

12. **Raywood ash** (*Fraxinus oxycarpa*)

**Leaf:** Opposite (sometimes a whorl of three), odd pinnate, 1.5–2.5 in. (4–6.5 cm) long, seven to nine serrated leaflets

**Fall color:** Purple, burgundy, red

**Flower color and season:** White; early spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Rust-colored buds and twigs, oval shape to tree, seedless, leaves are narrower than other cultivated ash trees

13. **Chaste tree** (*Vitex agnus-castus*;  
Figure 11)

**Leaf:** Opposite, palmate, 2–6 in. (5–15.2 cm) long, five to seven lance-shaped leaflets, gray-green, strongly scented

**Fall color:** Yellowish

**Flower color and season:** Lilac to pale-violet, pink, white; summer to early fall

**Key ID characteristics:** 3–6 in. (7.6–15.2 cm) cone-shaped flower clusters, small tree (15–25 ft [4.5–7.6 m] tall), bark gray and blocky



*Figure 11. Chaste tree leaves and flowers (photo by S. Porse, Wikimedia Commons).*



**14. London plane tree**

(*Platanus × acerifolia*; Figure 12)

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, 6–7 in.

(15.2–17.8 cm) long and 10 in.

(25.4 cm) wide, with three to five lobes

**Fall color:** Brown

**Flower color and season:** Red

(not showy); April

**Key ID characteristics:** Fruits

appear in numbers of two to three per stalk



*Figure 12. Fruits on a London plane tree occur in groups of two or three (photo by W.D. Brush, hosted by USDA–NRCS PLANTS Database).*

**15. Chinese juniper**

(*Juniperus chinensis*; Figure 13)

**Leaf:** Scale-like needles, 0.25 in.

(0.6 cm) long, gray to blue-green

**Fall color:** Evergreen

**Flower color and season:**

Greenish; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Bark is light

brown with ridges and is furrowed, bluish berry-like fruit



*Figure 13. Chinese juniper needles and fruit (photo by F.D. Richards, flickr.com).*

**16. Crabapple (*Malus* spp.; Figure 14)**

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, toothed margins,

1.5–3 in. (3.8–7.6 cm) long

**Fall color:** Yellow, red, purple

**Flower color and season:**

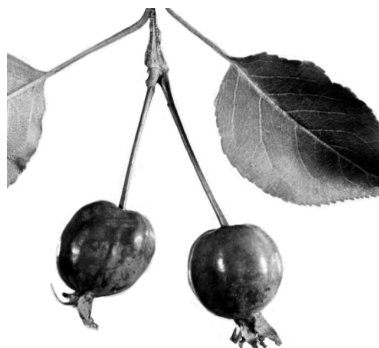
White to red; late spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Reddish

bark, red/yellow pomes (apple

fruit) in fall, smaller tree with

broad shape



*Figure 14. Crabapple fruits in the fall (photo by USDA–NRCS PLANTS Database).*



**17. Italian stone pine**

(*Pinus pinea*; **Figure 15**)

**Leaf:** Two needles per fascicle, bright green, slightly twisted, 5–8 in. (12.7–20.3 cm) long

**Fall color:** Evergreen

**Flower color and season:**

Greenish; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Umbrella-shaped tree, often without lower branches; reddish-brown bark with deep crevices; cones are large (about 6 in. [15.2 cm] long)



**Figure 15.** Italian stone pine with cones (photo by L.F. Garcia, Wikimedia Commons).

**18. Lacebark elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*; **Figure 16**)**

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, serrated margin, up to 2.5 in. (6.3 cm) long

**Fall color:** Yellow

**Flower color and season:**

Reddish-green to green; late summer to fall

**Key ID characteristics:** Serrated leaf with asymmetrical base, peeling bark, wire-like shape to tree



**Figure 16.** Lacebark elm leaves have serrated edges (photo by W.D. Brush, hosted by UDSA–NRCS PLANTS Database).

**19. Desert willow**

(*Chilopsis linearis*; **Figure 17**)

**Leaf:** Opposite or alternate, simple, linear, pointed at tip and at base, 4–12 in. (10.2–30.5 cm) long, willow-like

**Fall color:** Yellow

**Flower color and season:** Purple, pink, white; summer to fall

**Key ID characteristics:** Trumpet-shaped flowers, long seed pods



**Figure 17.** Desert willow flowers are trumpet-shaped and the trees have long seed pods (photo by P.J. Alexander, hosted by USDA–NRCS PLANTS Database).

**20. Mexican white oak**

(*Quercus polymorpha*; Figure 18)

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, thick and leathery; leaf shape is variable, but often 2–5 in. (5–12.7 cm) long with shallow lobes; lobes often toothed at tip

**Fall color:** Semi-evergreen

**Flower color and season:**

Green; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Open and airy structure, multiple leaf shapes possible within one tree, raised veins on leaf underside



**Figure 18.** Mexican white oak leaves (photo by K. Ziarnik, Wikimedia Commons).

**21. Mulberry (*Morus alba*; Figure 19)**

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, serrated margin, pointed tips, heart-shaped base, 3–6 in. (7.6–15.2 cm) long, pubescent underneath

**Fall color:** Green to yellow

**Flower color and season:** Light green; early spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Light green flowers with large pollen load, broad tree shape, small berry-like red fruit turning dark purple (on female plants)



**Figure 19.** Mulberry leaves have serrated margins (photo by W.D. Brush, hosted by USDA–NRCS PLANTS Database).

**22. Southern live oak**

(*Quercus virginiana*; Figure 20)

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, glossy, 2–5 in. (5–12.7 cm) long, dark green

**Fall color:** Evergreen

**Flower color and season:** Yellow; early spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Pointed leaves, evergreen, small acorns (less than 1 in. [2.5 cm])



**Figure 20.** Southern live oak acorns (photo by S. Hurst, hosted by USDA–NRCS PLANTS Database).

**23. California fan palm**

(*Washingtonia filifera*; **Figure 21**)

**Leaf:** Palmate, parallel venation, curved thorny petioles on mature palms, overall leaf has a diameter of 3–6 ft (0.9–1.8 m)

**Fall color:** Evergreen

**Flower color and season:**

White; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Fan-shaped fronds, fibrous and fat trunk, dark purple oblong fruit, fruit often protrudes out farther than the fronds



**Figure 21.** California fan palm trees (photo by S. Shebs, Wikimedia Commons).

**24. Arizona ash (*Fraxinus velutina*; **Figure 22**)**

**Leaf:** Opposite, odd pinnate, medium to dark green, velvety feel, three to five narrow to oval 3 in. (7.6 cm) long leaflets

**Fall color:** Yellow

**Flower color and season:** Green; early spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Gray and furrowed bark, pubescent buds, gray twigs, male flowers often damaged by gall mites



**Figure 22.** Arizona ash leaves are odd pinnate (photo by P.J. Alexander, hosted by USDA–NRCS PLANTS Database).

**25. Chinese pistache**

(*Pistacia chinensis*; **Figure 23**)

**Leaf:** Alternate, even pinnate, 10 to 16 narrow leaflets 2–4 in. (5–10.2 cm) long, dark green, strong scent

**Fall color:** Red, orange, yellow

**Flower color and season:** Green to red; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Small, green, berry-like fruit turning purpleish red in the fall; peeling gray bark has orangeish inner bark



**Figure 23.** Chinese pistache leaves (photo by K. Ziarnet, Wikimedia Commons).

**26. Italian cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*; Figure 24)**

**Leaf:** Dark green, scale-like, 0.07–0.2 in. (0.2–0.5 cm) long

**Fall color:** Evergreen

**Flower color and season:** Yellow-green (male), light green (female); spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Best identified by its columnar shape (e.g., 40–60 ft [12.2–18.3 m] tall by 3–5 ft [0.9–1.5 m] wide); oval, woody cones approximately 1 in. (2.5 cm) long



**Figure 24. Italian cypress with cones** (photo by W. Hagens, Wikimedia Commons).

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**27. Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)**

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, rounded, 1.5–3 in. (3.8–7.6 cm) long

**Fall color:** Red to maroon

**Flower color and season:** White; early spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Best identified by its rounded leaves, white flowers, pungent and unpleasant flower scent, pyramidal to oval shape

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**28. Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*; Figure 25)**

**Leaf:** Alternate, odd pinnate, nine to 17 leaflets 12–18 in. (30.5–45.7 cm) long, shallow serrations on leaf margin

**Fall color:** Yellow to brown

**Flower color and season:** Greenish-yellow; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Best identified by the presence of pecan fruit/nut



**Figure 25. Pecan fruit/nut** (NMSU photo).



29. **New Mexico olive**  
(*Forestiera neomexicana*;  
Figure 26)

**Leaf:** Opposite, simple,  
smooth, medium green,  
1.5 in. (3.8 cm) long

**Fall color:** Bright yellow

**Flower color and season:**

Green; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Gray  
to white bark often pro-  
ducing indentations in  
main stem, short overall  
stature with blue-black  
drupes (on female plants)



*Figure 26. Blue-black fruits can be found on female New Mexico olive trees (photo by USDA–NRCS PLANTS Database).*

30. **Honey locust**  
(*Gleditsia triacanthos*;  
Figure 27)

**Leaf:** Alternate, odd pinnate  
(sometimes bipinnate),  
5–8 in. (12.7–20.3 cm)  
long, yellow-green in color

**Fall color:** Golden yellow

**Flower color and season:**

Greenish-yellow; late  
spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Long,  
dark brown, twisted seed  
pods in the fall



*Figure 27. Honey locust leaves (photo by R.H. Mohlenbrock, hosted by USDA–NRCS PLANTS Database).*

31. **Arizona cypress** (*Cupressus arizonica*)

**Leaf:** Opposite, scale-like, blue-green to silver, 1/16 in. (0.15 cm) long

**Fall color:** Evergreen

**Flower color and season:** Green; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Leaves produce a cross shape when directly  
viewing top of leaf, distinctive skunk-like smell



**32. Lanceleaf cottonwood (*Populus × acuminata*)**

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, 2–4 in. (5–10.2 cm) long, upper surface dark green, lower surface light gray, elliptic shape with pointed tip

**Fall color:** Yellow

**Flower color and season:** Green; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Lanceolate leaves, fruits are catkins

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**33. Netleaf hackberry**

(*Celtis reticulata*; **Figure 28**)

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, 3 in. (7.6 cm) long, uneven base, rough texture

**Fall color:** Yellow

**Flower color and season:** Green; early spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Warty bark, wire-like tree shape, fruits are 0.25 in. (0.6 cm) and red in color



**Figure 28.** Netleaf hackberry leaves and fruit (photo by K. Ziarnik, Wikimedia Commons).

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**34. Mexican sycamore (*Platanus mexicana*)**

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, broad, 8 in. (20.3 cm) wide, toothed margins, medium green on upper surface, whitish on underside

**Fall color:** Yellow, orange, brown

**Flower color and season:** Green; spring

**Key ID characteristics:** Smooth, mottled, gray-white bark

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**35. Cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*; **Figure 29**)**

**Leaf:** Alternate, simple, dark green, rough texture, serrated margins, ovate, 2 in. (5 cm) in length

**Fall color:** Yellow

**Flower color and season:** Green; late summer to fall

**Key ID characteristics:** Scaly bark, drooping branches with corky ridges, oval tree shape



**Figure 29.** Cedar elm leaves have serrated edges (photo by W.D. Brush, hosted by USDA–NRCS PLANTS Database).

# GLOSSARY

**Alternate:** Leaves or flowers borne singly along a stem.

**Bipinnate:** A pinnately compound leaf in which the leaflets are themselves pinnately compound; also called “twice-pinnate.”

**Catkin:** A slim, cylindrical, spike-like cluster.

**Compound leaf:** Two or more leaflets attached to a single stem.

**Drupe:** A type of succulent fruit that encloses a single seed.

**Even pinnate:** A pinnately compound leaf with an even number of leaflets and without a terminal leaflet at the end.

**Evergreen:** A tree whose leaves do not change color in fall/winter and remain green year-round.

**Fascicle:** Clusters of needles, leaves, or branches.

**Hybrid:** A cross between two species, denoted by an “×”; for example, *Platanus × acerifolia*.

**Lanceolate:** Shaped like the head of a spear or lance; longer than it is wide, narrowly oval-shaped, broadest in the lower half and tapering to a tip.

**Linear:** Long and very narrow in shape, with sides that are mostly parallel.

**Lobes:** Rounded portions of a leaf margin (Figure 30).

**Margin:** The leaf edge.

**Odd pinnate:** A pinnately compound leaf with an odd number of leaflets and with a terminal leaflet at the end.

**Opposite:** Growing in pairs on either side of a stem.

**Ovate:** Oval- or egg-shaped.

**Palmate:** A compound leaf with several leaflets growing from the petiole, a central point (as in a palm tree; Figure 30).

**Petiole:** The stalk of a leaf that joins the leaf to the stem.

**Pinnate:** A compound leaf with several leaflets growing along an extended petiole, which may look like several small leaves (Figure 30).

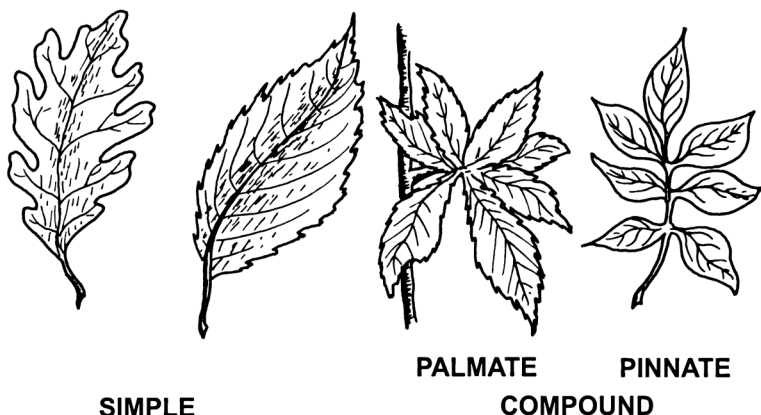
**Pubescent:** Having hairs.

**Serrate:** Having teeth- or saw-like notches (Figure 30).

**Simple:** Undivided or unsegmented, such as a leaf not divided into leaflets (Figure 30).

**Venation:** The arrangement of veins on a leaf.

**Whorl:** A ring of leaves, flowers, or other parts that are borne on the same level on an axis (such as a stem).



*Figure 30. Simple leaves are composed of one leaf (left), while compound leaves have two or more leaflets attached to a single stem (right). From left to right, a simple leaf with a lobed margin, a simple leaf with a serrated margin, a palmately compound leaf, and a pinnately compound leaf (illustration by Pearson Scott Foresman, Wikimedia Commons).*



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## NOTES

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