

## ▶▶▶ FEATURED PLANT

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**Common Name:** Pointleaf manzanita (Also called manzanilla or Mexican manzanita.)

**Scientific Name:** *Arctostaphylos pungens*

Manzanita is a woody evergreen shrub and member of the heather family (Ericaceae). It is characterized by smooth, deep red bark, thick green leaves and crooked branches. Manzanita is commonly a key component of the Arizona chaparral vegetation community and a primary understory species in the pine-oak woodlands. *Arctostaphylos pungens* is native to the Southwestern United States and to northern and central Mexico. The genus name is from the Greek where "Arktos" refers to bear and "staphyle" refers to a cluster of grapes. "Pungens" refers to the sharp points at the ends of the leaves. Manzanita means little apple in Spanish and refers to the shape, color, and taste of the fruits.

Pointleaf manzanita an erect, spreading shrub, found on dry hillsides and uplands at 3,500 to 6,500

feet in elevation and may reach heights of five to seven feet. It often forms dense thickets. It has a fibrous, shallow root system, except in sandy soils, where taproots are usually well developed. Most roots are found in the top eight inches of soil. The simple leaves are leathery, green to blueish-green, glossy, elliptical in shape, and about 1½ inches long with smooth margins that come to a point at the tip and base. The leaves are alternately arranged on branches.

The flowers are a delicate white to pale pink, urn-shaped, found in clusters at the tip of the branches, and often attract hummingbirds and insects. They are hermaphrodite, having both male and female organs, and are pollinated by insects. The fruit is an apple-like drupe, about ¼ inch wide that turns red at maturity. It is only occasionally browsed by deer, but the tasty berries are eaten by birds, rodents & bears.



SUSAN PATER

Inset flower image: Patrick J. Alexander, hosted by the USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

Manzanita is noted for its beautiful smooth, shiny red-mahogany bark and branches which makes a great contrast with the evergreen foliage. *Arctostaphylos pungens* is found in eleven of our fifteen counties.

## ▶▶▶ FEATURED BIRD

Dan L. Fischer - Author of *Early Southwest Ornithologists, 1528-1900*. University of Arizona Press

**Common Name:** White-winged Dove

**Scientific Name:** *Zenaida asiatica*

Early spring marks increased bird activity of many species along with more distinct and delightful songs. This is especially true with the beginning of courtship. The northern migration from Mexico during this period includes one of the more vocal and conspicuous birds, the White-winged Dove. Not limited to riparian corridors of mesquite thickets or cottonwood, they also gather into loose flocks among areas of paloverde and saguaro. At higher elevations they also frequent oaks. There is much energy expended as they compete for nesting sites and mate selection. Aerial displays become a common occurrence, with males suddenly rising with vigorous flapping and slight whistling of wings. They quickly gain elevation before making a broad, single circle on extended wings in a glide back to a nearby perch. Their white crescent wing markings can be seen from above, and the rounded tail with white outer tips, almost completing a white band, contrast sharply against the overall gray to light brown body. On closer inspection they exhibit a beautiful orange to reddish iris surrounded by a circular ring of blue.

As the season progresses, cooing intensifies, especially if the colony, or rookery, is large. This repetitious song is reminiscent of a phrase "who

cooks for you." When the perched male is displaying before a female, he tilts his body forward with head down while raising his tail high. Then, maintaining a stationary position, amid continuous cooing, he spreads and flashes his tail while momentarily opening his wings displaying the upper white wing crescent. This behavior is performed repeatedly during courtship.

Nests are quickly constructed in three to five days in a variety of situations that may include mesquite, paloverde, cholla cactus, desert hackberry and saguaro. Two white eggs are then laid in a very flimsy nest of small sticks by early May. Both parents incubate and after the young hatch they often shade their chicks as the nests are often exposed to direct sunlight with very little relief from the intense heat. If their nesting occurs in the lower deserts it generally coincides when saguaros are crowned with lovely white flowers. The doves greatly aid in their pollination as they move from flower to flower in search of nectar and perhaps pollen. When the saguaro fruit ripen, turn bright red and split, they quickly indulge in the pulp and black seeds. At this time some birds become very protective of their food source. The birds many have two or more broods depending on food availability before migrating back to their wintering grounds in Mexico. Their departure begins rather abruptly in September.



DAN L. FISCHER

Naming this dove dates back 250 years to Swedish taxonomist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) who, after acquiring a somewhat historically obscure painting of the bird from English naturalist George Edwards (1694-1773), described and published his account of it in 1758. Linnaeus applied the Latin name *asiatica*, "Asian," for the specific name mistakenly thinking the original specimen came from that region. Charles L. J. Bonaparte (1803-1857), nephew to Napoleon and cousin to his wife Zenaide, named the genus *Zenaida* for her. Bonaparte was a systematic ornithologist, and at that time, was residing in America from 1822-1858.