

## HORSE CHESTNUT FAMILY

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### Keys:

#### **A. Winter buds not sticky:**

*Flowers with the claw part of the petals longer than the calyx.*

#### **1. *Flowers with bell-shaped calyx; petals pale yellow-green, yellow or yellowish-white:***

##### **Ohio Buckeye: *Aesculus Glabra***

The flower petals are almost equal in length; fruit is covered with blunt spines; trees of east central U.S. (Pennsylvania to Iowa and south into Tennessee). The Texas Buckeye *Aesculus Glabra* variety *arguta* occurs in parts of Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas. The Texas Buckeye has seven leaflets, while the typical form has only five leaflets. Medium sized trees, 30' to 40'.

##### **Yellow or SweetBuckeye: *Aesculus Octandra***

Flower petals are very unequal in length, fruits are not spiny. Trees of southeastern and eastern U.S.. Large trees to 85 feet found in mountains of southwest Pennsylvania to northern Alabama and Georgia, as well as west into Texas. A moist-site tree but it still needs drainage. Plant is unpalatable to wildlife. Livestock is attracted to the young shoots and sweet seeds and is poisonous to them. Indians removed the poison (aesculin) by roasting the seed among stones to loosen the shells, then peeling, mashing, and leaching them in water for several days. A tasty, nutritious flour resulted from these efforts. Husk is thin, smooth, brownish, and pitted.

#### **2. *Flowers with a tubular calyx; petal scarlet, cream or yellowish green:***

##### **Red Buckeye: *Aesculus Pavia***

Petals are scarlet; fruits 1.5 - 2.3" in diameter. Trees of the southeastern U.S.. Short tree or shrub, 20' tall and is

found in rich moist soil at low elevations in woods and along streams from Virginia to North Florida and West to Louisiana. An understory tree under River Birch, Loblolly Pine, Yellow Buckeye, and many oaks. Most wildlife avoid this tree, although squirrels may eat newly fallen nuts. An ornamental hybrid, *aesculus x carnea*, has been created by crossing Red Buckeye with the European Horse Chestnut (*aesculus Hippocastanum*). It has the nice red flowers plus the handsome foliage of the horse chestnut. Smooth husk.

##### **Dwarf or Painted Buckeye: *Aesculus Salvatica***

Petals are pink cream or yellowish green; fruits are 09"-1.6" in diameter. Tree of southeastern U.S.. Short tree or shrub, 33' tall. Found in moist sites in woods and by streams. From southern Virginia to north Florida and up to 3,281 feet in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Of little use to wildlife since leaves and fruits are toxic. Fruits are leathery and smooth.

#### **B. Winter Buds Sticky:**

*Flowers with the claw part of the petals shorter than the calyx.*

##### **California Buckeye: *Aesculus Californica***

1. Leaflets are stalked; flowers have 4 petals. Trees of California. Short tree or shrub to 30'. Fruits have smooth husks. Species of little use to wildlife except as cover. Indians once used the ground nuts to stupefy fish in lakes and streams.

2. Leaflets are without a stalk (sessile); flowers have five petals. Introduced from Europe and Asia, commonly cultivated. Husks are leathery and spiny. Large tree to 82' with 5 - 7 leaves. In TV programs deer have been seen eating the nuts (in Poland and the Himalayan foothills).