

KNOWN FOR ITS STRIKING FALL FOLIAGE, LOST MAPLES STATE NATURAL AREA HOLDS MORE THAN MAPLE TREES. RUGGED AND ROCKY TRAILS LEAD TO SWEEPING VISTAS, SHADY CANYONS, AND TRICKLING STREAMS. QUIET CAMPSITES, FOR CAMPING OR BACKPACKING, PROVIDE PLACES TO RECHARGE. YOU CAN EXPLORE THOUSANDS OF ACRES OF WILDERNESS AT THIS HILL COUNTRY TREASURE.



THANK YOU FOR VISITING!

While enjoying this natural beauty, please remember everything you see in the natural area is protected. Artifacts, rocks, animals, and plants (even maple leaves) are all part of the region's rich natural and cultural heritage. Help us keep the natural area a special place for everyone.

- Hike only on designated trails and stay out of closed areas.
- Leave no trace. Keep your natural area clean by picking up your trash.
- Preserve the natural area for future generations and leave plants, animals, and fossils where you find them.
- Get involved by joining the Friends of Lost Maples State Natural Area, a volunteer organization committed to the preservation, protection, and improvement of the natural area.

Lost Maples State Natural Area
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(830) 966-3413
www.tpwd.texas.gov/lostmaples/



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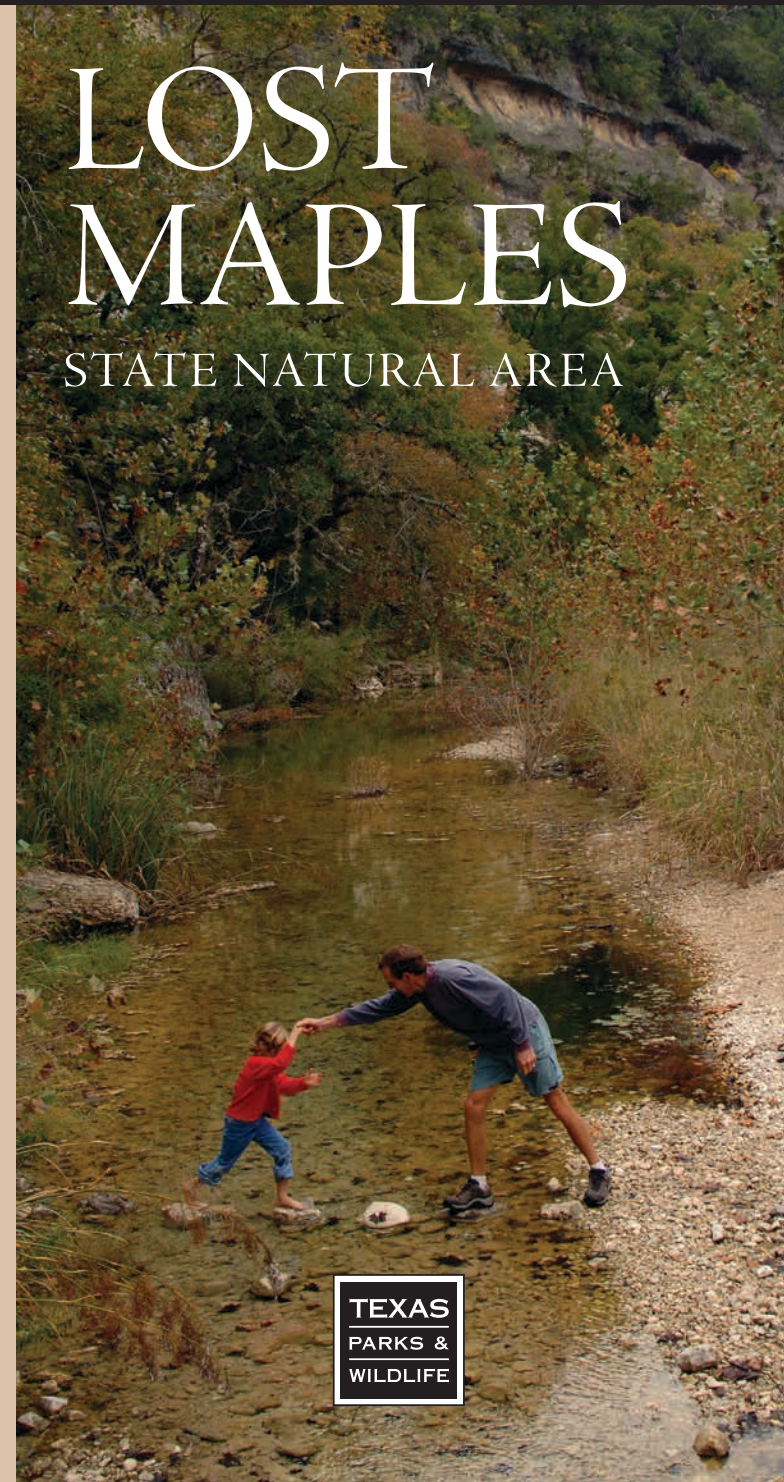
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INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

LOST MAPLES

STATE NATURAL AREA





Chemical changes in the leaves make for a spectacular show.

CHANGING BEAUTY

Autumn's magic has its roots in summer. In warmer months, each bigtooth maple leaf acts as a miniature factory. A leaf turns sunlight into sugar, giving the tree energy to live and grow. The shorter days and cooler air of early fall signal a change, like the whistle at the end of a workday. At that time, the leaves halt their production of sugar.

Chemical changes within each leaf bring new colors to the canyons. Reds, oranges, yellows, and browns emerge and replace greenery by November. The hue of each tree depends on the season's temperature. An early frost can curtail the year's display.

With their bright red foliage, bigtooth maples are the natural area's most celebrated resident. Other trees offer a show, too. The hand-sized leaves of sycamore trees turn golden in the fall. The deep green leaves and cinnamon bark of the Texas madrone offer an eye-catching contrast.



After the burst of color in the fall, the canyons quiet with winter. Last year's leaves line the ground. They'll become next year's fertilizer, nourishing new sycamores, maples and madrones in springtime.

Texas madrone

SURVIVING AND THRIVING IN THE HILL COUNTRY

Recent settlers and scientists were not the first to see a bigtooth maple or a Lacey oak. These trees, and many other plants, supported prehistoric people long before ranches, parks, and towns were here. While we don't know the ancient names for many plants and animals, we do know that early people relied on them to survive.

Look around and consider what it would take to make a life here. Could you gather enough food, water and shelter to live? For thousands of years, people did just that in these canyons and plateaus. Fresh water, food, and good stone for tool making drew prehistoric people here starting around 10,000 years ago. They stayed here temporarily, and moved when seasons or food sources changed.

In the fall, they may have eaten the madrone tree's small, orange-red fruit—if they beat the birds to it! The near-constant flow of the Sabinal River, a comfort in warmer months, provided water. Some groups built large earth ovens with rocks and dirt to cook fiber-rich plants. They roasted leaves or roots for up to two days, softening them enough to eat. The remains of these ovens, known as burned rock middens, now look like piles of scorched rock hidden among thick brush.

The canyons and plateaus here looked different to prehistoric people. Many native plants we see today, like Ashe juniper (cedar), mountain laurel and prickly pear cactus, started thriving here only after farmers and ranchers altered the landscape. If you find any remnants of the area's past, please leave what you find and tell a ranger.



MORE THAN MAPLES

Discover a different landscape up on the hilltops. Up there, tall grasses and small clusters of trees dot the land. One of these plateau dwellers is the Lacey oak, named not for delicate leaves but for a Hill Country naturalist, Howard Lacey.

Lacey was an Englishman who moved here in 1882, when he was 26 years old. While living on his ranch outside of Kerrville, he bred goats and examined the world around him. Lacey was most interested in the same kinds of animals that you might be looking for – birds, mammals, and butterflies. As a dedicated naturalist, he recorded other living things, too, like the Lacey oak.

You may notice that the oak's gray-green color is different than other deciduous trees. Some also call it the blue oak because its leaves sometimes look bluish. Take a hike to the higher reaches of the natural area to see this Hill Country beauty.

Lacey oak

COURTESY ANDY AND SALLY WASOWSKI,
LADY BIRD JOHNSON WILDFLOWER CENTER

