

Sophora secundiflora—Texas Mountain Laurel

The genus *Sophora* is in the legume family (Fabaceae) and consists of approximately 40-50 species native to tropical or warm temperate regions of the world. *S. secundiflora* is a large shrub native to Texas, New Mexico and northern Mexico. It has single or multiple trunks with upright branches and a symmetrical “vase-shaped” crown. Due to its small size, slow growth, tolerance of low rainfall, heat and, alkaline soils, it is ideal for the urban environment of the southwest. It is particularly useful in yards and patios. *S. secundiflora* has glossy, evergreen leaves with 7-9 leaflets and fragrant, violet-blue flowers in pendant, terminal clusters, which are displayed in late winter and early spring. The flowers mature into dry, tan to gray seed pods which collapse around the seeds to produce a “beaded” look. The seeds are hard and bright red-orange in color. They have been used to string into necklaces and bracelets, which have been found in archeological sites going back thousands of years. This species is propagated from seed. However, all plant parts are poisonous, especially the mature seeds, due to the presence of the strong alkaloid known as cytisine, which is chemically similar to nicotine. The immature, developing pods should be removed if there is a concern about poisoning.



See *Sophora secundiflora* in the median of Victoria Avenue between Millsweet and La Sierra.

