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INC.

Arctostaphylos 'Dr. Hurd'

The genus Arctostaphylos contains fifty or so species which are native to California and these have an extensive and wide distribution - from sand dunes, to chapparal, to oak woodlands and into the high mountains. It is a genus which has given us many fine garden plants, among which are the varieties and hybrids of the common manzanita (A. manzanita).

'Dr.Hurd' is a very distinct selection of the native Manzanita. It is arborescent in habit and produces a severally branched tree from a more or less ground level crown or on a very short trunk. Ultimately it would appear to develop into a specimen which will grow to a height of sixteen feet and achieve a spread of twenty five feet: thus making it easily the biggest manzanita yet available for use in the landscape or garden.

The size to which a specimen will develop may well depend on the system of pruning which is adopted to shape and enhance the ornamental characteristics of this tree, and although such pruning is unlikely to affect the eventual height, it would most probably reduce the potential spread. Pruning will be required to shape the tree and so expose the extremely decorative and colourful main branches and trunk. This trunk and its branching system have the potential to create a strongly structural component in a landscape and can contribute an elegant architectural feature to a design, and this in turn is enhanced by the colour of the bark, which matures into a shiny, rich and dark, mahogany red. In common with many other manzanitas the bark also peels in short vertical curls.

Although this plant has obvious affinities with Arctostaphylos manzanita it is undoubtedly of hybrid origin. The original tree was noticed growing in the 'Los Trigos' garden of Dr. Cuthbert Hurd in Portola Valley in 1972, by the then SHF Superintendent, John Coulter who on various visits to the garden, recognised the potential of this plant and brought back cutting material to the Foundation. The origins of this plant are not chronicled, but it was probably obtained as a seedling from the Louis Edmonds Native Plant Nursery in Danville in the middle 1950s when the garden was being planted by its then owner Mr. Carl Wheat. After evaluation the plant was introduced by the Foundation in 1976 under the cultivar name 'Dr. Hurd', thus perpetuating the name of a discerning gardener who co-operated in the activities of the

Foundation and was much interested in native plants.

The leaves of this cultivar are exceptionally large (up to three inches long and half as wide), elliptic to ovate in shape and, when growing vigorously, can be almost round. When the leaves are compared with the typical A. manzanita they will be seen to be much smoother and a distinctly lighter green on both surfaces, thus producing a fine foil for the prolific quantities of clear white flowers.

The pure white, bell-like flowers are carried in showy, large, dense clusters which are produced in great abundance; and each cluster may contain up to one hundred flowers. The base of the calyx lobes are green which, as in many plants, enhances the whiteness of the corolla tube, although in young flowers the base of the tube may be pink. The blossoming period is from late January to March and the flowers are followed by the typical manzanita berries which remain on the tree through the summer and into the autumn.

This plant has demonstrated a strong root system and appears to be relatively tolerant of those disease organisms causing root rots. Stem dieback, which has proved to be a major problem with many manzanitas both in the landscape and in nursery production, has not been noted to be a problem in this cultivar, other than occasionally in moister coastal areas.

Although this is a vigorously growing tree, care should be exercised in siting and establishing a specimen in the landscape. Manzanitas, in common with many other native plants of dry provenances, are not successful in waterlogged situations or heavy soils and under such conditions are more than likely to succumb to root rotting problems. When establishing a nursery plant from a container it is therefore prudent to plant with the top of the root ball level with, and never below, the surrounding soil or even to plant on a slight mound. Watering will be necessary to establish the tree, especially in its first season, but subsequently watering should only be undertaken when required, both to conserve water and to avoid any possibility of root problems.

Small tree; evergreen; flowering; specimen structural plant; low water use.