

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ASPENS OF TEXAS: THE RAREST OF THEM ALL?

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While Quaking Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) is considered one of the most widespread trees in North America, it is rare within the state of Texas. This species occurs within three counties, Brewster, Culberson, and Jeff Davis, within remote high elevations of the Chisos, Guadalupe, and Davis Mountains respectively. While population limits remain questionable for some locations, leaf material, for future molecular analysis, and general status data have been collected from six of nine known sites. Davis Mountain aspens appear most robust based upon tree size, number, and distribution. Chisos Mountain aspens appear most perilous with fewer numbers and greatest habitat disruption. While only a single population has been documented, the Guadalupe aspens seem to be flourishing and increasing in numbers. Future research to be addressed includes: do the Texas aspens represent a single fractured or separate populations; what degree, if any, of genetic diversity exists between and among Texas aspen populations; and, if present, what is the source of genetic variation within Texas aspens?