

Carya laciniosa (Shellbark Hickory) Walnut Family (Juglandaceae)

Introduction:

Shellbark hickory is similar to the pignut and shagbark hickories. It was once abundant in American bottomlands but is now nearly extinct from its native habitat. Its striking bark and large winter buds add to the ornamental value of the tall, slender tree. The bud scales fold back, petal-like, as new foliage emerges. Characteristic bright-orange twigs, its open habit and bark give it winter interest.

Culture:

Large, slow-growing shellbark hickory thrives in full sun and wet bottomlands and may withstand its roots being periodically submerged. Plant it in a park-like area where large size, leaf litter, fruit and twig drop will not be a problem. Its savory nuts attract squirrels and other animals that may be unwanted in a residential area.

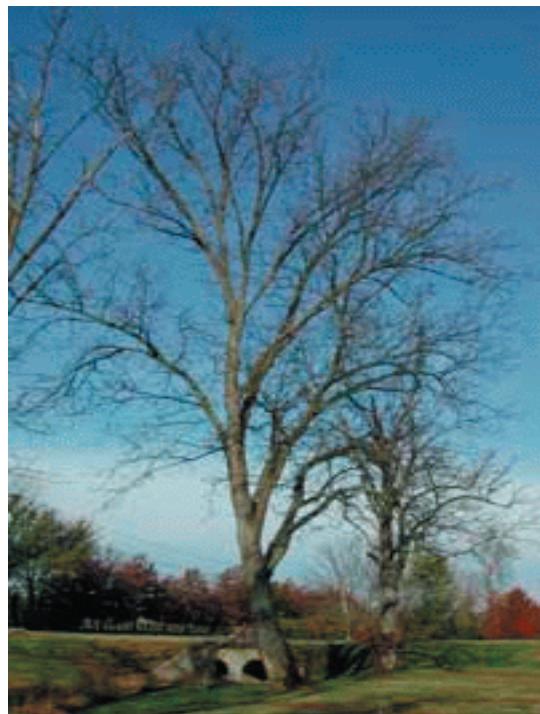
The hickory bark beetle is sometimes a significant pest on this tree, as are canker worm, gall aphid and borers. Hickory is susceptible to leaf spot, powdery mildew and crown gall but is resistant to Verticillium wilt.

Wild-grown hickories have deep tap roots that make them difficult to transplant. All hickories leaf out late in the spring.

Additional comments:

The genus name, *Carya*, is from the Greek word for a walnut tree; its species name, *laciniosa*, means full of flaps or folds, referring to the loosening plates of bark. Although only one hickory species exists outside the eastern United States (in eastern China), in pre-glacial history, hickories covered all of Europe and the Mediterranean.

Shellbark hickory has the largest and sweetest flavored nut of the hickories. Native Americans stored massive quantities of these hickory nuts as “hickory milk” was a nutritious staple of most of their cooking. Hickory sap was also collected by Native Americans and used as syrup or sugar.



Botanical Characteristics:

Native habitat - Restricted area in eastern U.S., including Kentucky.

Growth habit - This large tree is high-branched with a straight, slender trunk and a narrow crown. Lower branches droop, upper ascend.

Tree size - A very slow-growing tree, this species attains a height of 60 to 80 feet.

Flower and fruit - Male and female flowers are small, without petals, and clustered in hanging catkins. Fruit is a large thick-shelled nut in a green husk.

Leaf - Generally this 10- to 24-inch-long leaf has seven downy leaflets. Fall color is yellow-brown and leaf stalks persist on the branches through the winter.

Hardiness - Winter hardy to USDA Zone 5.

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World champion trees can be found in Missouri (145 feet), Kentucky (139 feet) and Indiana (136 feet). Shellbark hickory was first introduced into cultivation in North America in 1800.

The wood of shellbark hickory is heavy and tough yet flexible and shock-resistant. Because of these qualities, it is often used in sporting equipment (skis, lacrosse sticks, bows for archery) and in tools (ax handles).

Hickory wood also has low conductivity of heat, a characteristic that made it the wood of choice for wagon wheel hubs. Today it is used in sulkies for harness horses. American pioneers were also aware of hickory's excellence as a source of fuel and used the wood to heat their drafty cabins.

Shellbark hickory, abundant at settlements on bottomlands, was overused Native populations were nearly eliminated and today are still rare.



Mature fruit