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Identifying Trees of Michigan MSU Extension Replaces E616 Familiar Trees of Michigan Mel Koelling, Extension Specialist, Forestry Department August 1992 28 pages

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# Identifying Trees of Michigan



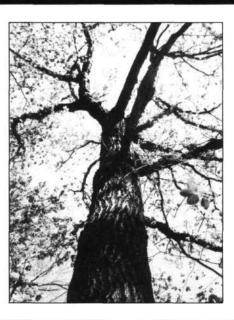
Extension Bulletin E-2332; Replaces E-616, Familiar Trees of Michigan August 1992



## Identifying Trees of Michigan

Forests are an important feature of the Michigan landscape. Nearly 18 million acres or essentially 50 percent of the land area of the state are occupied by forest vegetation. These forests contribute significantly to the economic well-being of the state through a variety of products. Michigan's forests also provide an environment for many recreational activities while creating a habitat favorable for many wildlife species. Forests also make important contributions to the quality of Michigan's many lakes and streams.

Michigan's forests are diverse. More than 100 different species of trees



grow in the state. Not all trees are present in all locations, reflecting species preferences for differing sites and environments. In addition to the many native species, several other trees have been introduced into the state and can be found in many locations.

This publication briefly describes 64 of the more common trees present in Michigan. It is designed to assist anyone with an interest in tree identification in becoming better acquainted with some of the most important trees in the state. Illustrations, keys and other descriptive information are provided.

#### Acknowledgements:

By Mel Koelling, Extension Specialist , Forestry Department, MSU

Michigan State University would like to thank William Carey Grimm, noted botanist and science teacher, for permission to use his outstanding drawings in this bulletin. Appreciation is also extended to the Stackpole Company, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, publishers of **The Book of Trees**, written and illustrated by Mr. Grimm. Without the permission of the author and the publisher, this publication would not have been attempted. James Neal, formerly MSU District Extension Leader, Resource Development, prepared the original publication E-616, *Familiar Trees of Michigan*.

**Cover:** A sprawling Burr Oak is an old friend to Bellvue Highway travelers, Brookfield Township, Eaton Co. Courtesy: Bob Neumann, Outreach Communications, MSU.

**Above:** Squirrel's view of a Northern Red Oak tree in MSU's Baker Woodland.

Courtesy: Leslie Johnson, Outreach Communications, MSU.

There are many books available to anyone interested in further information about trees. Some of them are listed below:

Manual of the Trees of North America, Charles Sprague Sargent Smith, Peter Publishing Co., New York, NY, 1952.

Michigan Trees, Charles Herbert Otis University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, MI, 1931 (reprinted 1976).

Michigan Trees Worth Knowing, Norman F. Smith Michigan Department of Conservation, Lansing, MI, 1961.

North American Trees, Richard J. Preston Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa, 1976.

**Textbook of Dendrology**, William M. Harlow and Ellwood S. Harrar, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, NY, 1969.

The Book of Trees, William C. Grimm Stackpole Company, Harrisburg, PA, 1965.

**Trees**, Herbert S. Zimm and Alexander C. Martin Simon and Schuster Publishing Company, New York, NY, 1952.

**Trees of North America,** Thomas S. Elias, Gramercy Publishing Company, New York, N.Y. 1987.

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### How to Use this Publication

A number of different characteristics can be used to identify trees of Michigan. The illustrations on pages 5-7 show basic differences in leaves, buds and fruits, and name some of the trees with these characteristics. The "Key to Identifying Trees of Michigan (below) can help you use these characteristics and the process of elimination to identify trees.

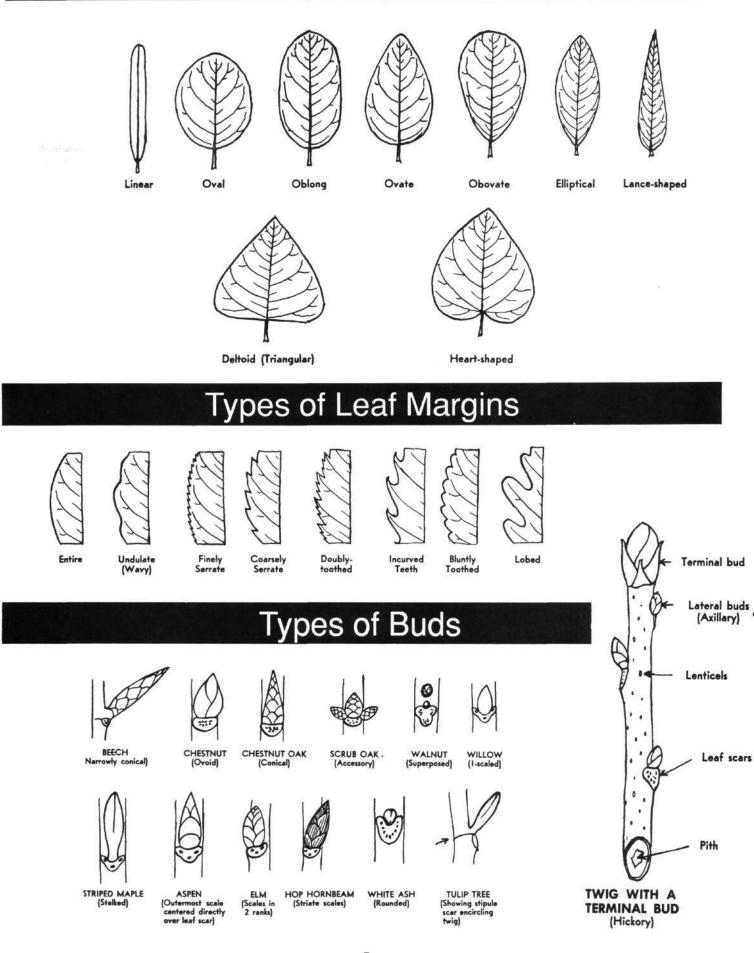
The remainder of the publication shows leaves, twigs, buds and fruit of 64 of the most common trees of Michigan.

<ol> <li>Trees with needle-like or scale-like leaves; fruit a cone, or cone-like (conifers).</li> </ol>	
A. Leaves needle-like.	
1. Leaves in bundles or on clusters.	
a) Leaves in bundles	
(1) Leaves or needles in 5s	White Pine
(2) Leaves or needles in 2s	
(a) Leaves 4-to 6-inches long	Red Pine
(b) Leaves 1-to 2-inches long	Jack Pine
b) Leaves in clusters, soft and flexible, shed in fall	Tamarack
2. Leaves not in bundles	
a) Leaves flattened.	
(1) Leaves 1/2-inch long, cones 1/2-to 3/4-inch long and hang free	Hemlock
(2) Leaves 3/4-inch long, cones 2-to 3-inches and erect	
b) Leaves four sided.	
(1) Branchlets smooth, needles ill-scented, 1-to 2-inch cones	White Spruce
(2) Branchlets hairy, short needles pleasantly scented, 1/2-to 3/4-inch cones	
B. Leaves scale-like	
1. Branchlets flattened in fan-like sprays, fruit reddish brown	Northern White
	Cedar
2. Branchlets 4 angled, not in fan-like sprays, fruit berry-like and dark blue	Bed Cedar
A. Leaves compound. 1. Opposite. a) Beleviely compound, cause leaflete	Here Chestert
Opposite.     a) Palmately compound; seven leaflets	Horse Chestnut
<ol> <li>Opposite.         <ul> <li>Palmately compound; seven leaflets</li> <li>b) Pinnately compound.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	
<ol> <li>Opposite.         <ul> <li>a) Palmately compound; seven leaflets</li></ul></li></ol>	
<ol> <li>Opposite.         <ul> <li>a) Palmately compound; seven leaflets</li></ul></li></ol>	Ashes
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<ol> <li>Opposite.         <ul> <li>a) Palmately compound; seven leaflets</li></ul></li></ol>	Ashes Box-elder
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<ol> <li>Opposite.         <ul> <li>a) Palmately compound; seven leaflets</li></ul></li></ol>	Ashes Box-elder Honey Locust
<ol> <li>Opposite.         <ul> <li>a) Palmately compound; seven leaflets</li></ul></li></ol>	Ashes Box-elder Honey Locust Kentucky Coffee
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<ol> <li>Opposite.         <ul> <li>a) Palmately compound; seven leaflets</li></ul></li></ol>	Ashes Box-elder Honey Locust Kentucky Coffee Tree Staghorn Sumac Black Walnut
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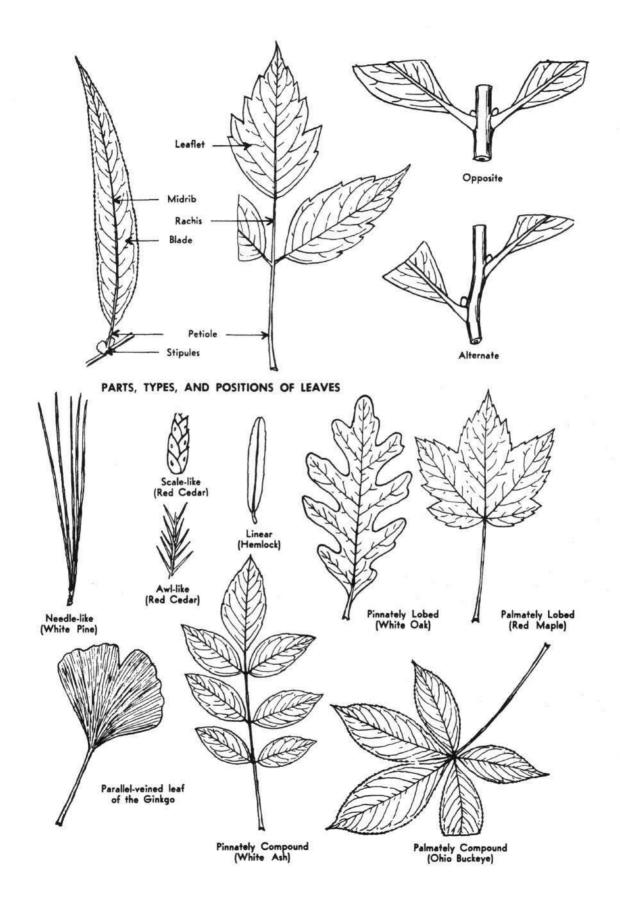
Key to Identifying Trees of Michigan

		· .
		· · · ·
	(iii) Bark yellow and peeling, wintergreen taste	Yellow Birch
	(ii) Bark white and tight to tree	Gray Birch
	(i) Bark white and peeling	White Birch
	<ul> <li>(ii) Fruit not fleshy, leaf petiole short, leaves lance-shaped with long tapered tips</li> <li>[b] Margin doubly serrated</li> </ul>	
	(i) Fruit fleshy, leaves finely toothed, fruit a one-seeded drupe	
	(a) Margin finely serrated	
	ii) Margin finely or doubly serrated	Dearit
	<ul> <li>i) Spiny, toothed or bristle-like at the end of each vein; fruit a nut.</li> <li>[a] Bark smooth, blue gray; terminal bud long, pointed; fruit a small triangular nut</li></ul>	Reach
	(b) Leaf margin not entire.	
	i) Leaf heart-shaped; fruit a legume	Redbud
	<ul> <li>(2) Leaves with equal-base (not one-sided)</li> <li>(a) Leaf margin entire</li> </ul>	
	ii) Leaf ovate; fruit a small dark red drupe, corky bark	Hackberry
	i) Leaf heart-shaped; fruit a small woody nut subtended by a leaf-like blade	
	(b) Margin not doubly serrated	
	<ul> <li>(1) Leaves with unequal bases, one-sided as to midrib position</li> <li>(a) Margins doubly serrated</li></ul>	Flme
	b) Leaves not lobed or notched.	
	ii) Leaves rounded; inside of acorn shell smooth; kernel sweet	White Oaks
		Black Oaks
	i) Leaves bristle tipped, inside of acorn shell hairy; kernel bitter	Red or
	(2) Leaves longer than wide. (a) Leaves medium to large, fruit an acorn	
	<ul><li>[c] Leaf one form, pointed lobes, hollow petiole at base; old bark peels in thin curled piece</li></ul>	Sycamore
	[b] Leaf mitten-shaped, twigs zig-zag; fruit edible	
		Aspen, Poplars
	[a] Leaf margin finely to coarsely toothed, petioles laterally flattened	
	i) Leaf margins not entire	
	<ul> <li>(b) Twigs and leaves not aromatic, leaves of one form</li> <li>i) Leaf margin entire, four lobed; flower tulip-shaped</li> </ul>	Yellow Pooler
	3-lobed	Sassafras
	(a) Twigs and leaves aromatic, leaves of three forms; entire, mitten-shaped and	<b>•</b> •
	(1) Leaves as wide as they are long.	
۷.	a) Leaves lobed or notched	
2	(2) Small to medium, ovate; fruit a red berry, borne in clusters	
	CA STORETO CONTRACTOR STATE OF A DOLLAR DOLLAR OF A	

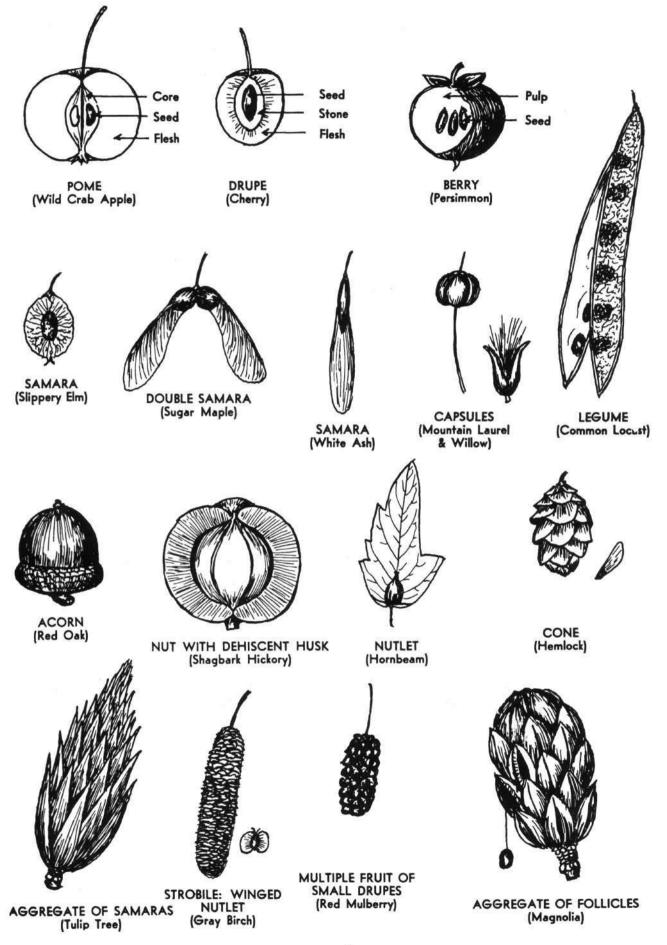
## Shapes of Leaves



## Parts, Types and Positions of Leaves



## Types of Fruit



WHITE PINE

(Pinus strobus)

**RED PINE** 



White Pine – Soft flexible bluish green needles, five in a bundle with a 4 to 8 inch cone slightly curved. Once called the "Monarch of the North". State tree of Michigan.



Red Pine – Also called Norway pine. Needles dark green in color, two to a bundle and 4 to 6 inches long. The cones are 2 inches long. Needles break clean when bent.

JACK PINE

(Pinus banksiana)

SCOTCH PINE

(Pinus sylvestris)





Jack Pine – Tree of light sandy soils, forming pure stands on burned over forest lands in the north. Cones may remain closed for years, usually heat will open cones to release seed.

Scotch Pine – Bluish-green, slightly twisted needles. Cones 1½ to 2½ inches long, pointing backward along branches. Favorite for Christmas trees. Imported from Europe so usually planted.

#### AUSTRIAN PINE

BLACK SPRUCE

(Pinus nigra)

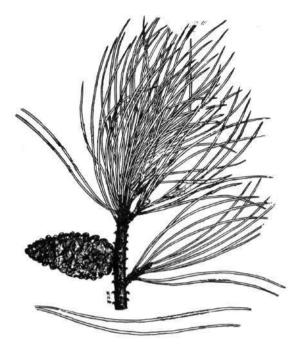
(Picea mariana)

NORWAY SPRUCE

WHITE SPRUCE

(Picea abies)

(Picea glauca)

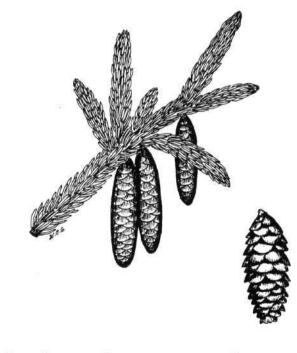


Austrian Pine – Similar to Red Pine. Dark dull green needles, 3 to 5 inches long. Cones are stalkless and 2 to 3 inches long. Frequently planted as an ornamental tree. A native of Europe.



Norway Spruce – Imported tree planted as an ornamental. Large cylindrical cones 4 to 7 inches long. Branchlets hang from lateral limbs on older trees like weeping willow. Widely planted in the U.S.



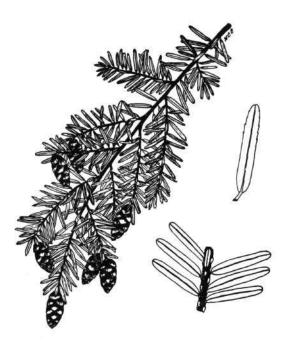


**Black Spruce** – Truly a northern tree, extending to limits of tree growth. Needles blunt-pointed and 1/4 to 3/8 of an inch long. Cones 3/4 to 1 inch long. Often cut for Christmas trees.

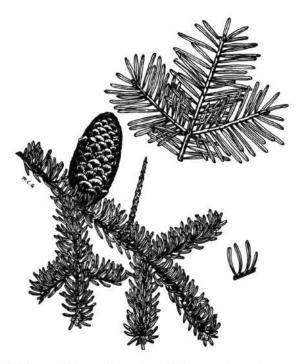
White Spruce – Frequently used for Christmas trees and pulpwood. Bluish-green needle, 1/2 to 3/4 inches long. Cones are 1-1/2 to 2 inches long with thin, rounded, smooth-margined scales.

#### EASTERN HEMLOCK

(Tsuga canadensis)



**Eastern Hemlock** – Leaves 1/2 inch long with a stalk which remains on the twig when leaf falls. Slightly notched leaf tips. Hemlock bark is rich in tannic acid, and used to be in demand for tanning hides.



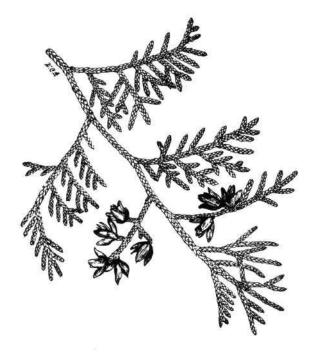
**Balsam Fir** – Favorite Christmas tree because of fragrant odor. Branches form "cross", symbol of Christmas and Easter. Flat leaf 3/4 inch long with two prominent whitish lines on the lower surface. Difficult to grow in plantations.

NORTHERN WHITE CEDAR

(Thuja occidentalis)

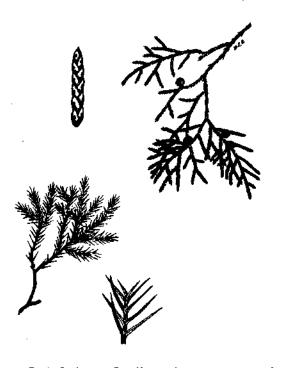


Tamarack – Sheds leaves in fall. Leaf is 1/2 to 3/4 inches long, very narrow, soft and flexible. Leaf is pale-green in color turning yellow in fall. Used for poles and pulpwood. Wood is heavy, hard and strong.



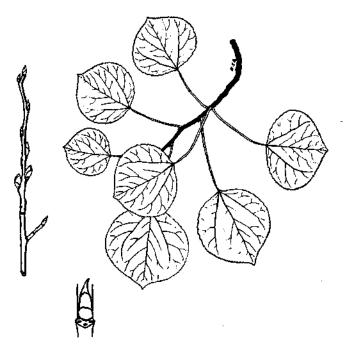
Northern White Cedar – Widely used for fence posts, shingles and poles. Leaves are 1/8 to 1/4 inch long and overlapping. Preferred food and cover for whitetailed deer.

#### EASTERN RED CEDAR



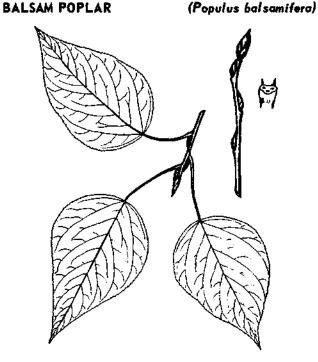
**Eastern Red Cedar** — Really a Juniper not a cedar. Used for cedar chests because of odor and color. Cones are dark blue and berry-like and have a sweet resinous taste. Good bird food.

LARGE-TOOTHED ASPEN (Populus grandidentata)



**Trembling Aspen** — Commonly called "popple" or "poplar". Leaves are round and "quake" in the slightest breeze. Tree enjoyed by deer and beaver. Excellent pulpwood tree.

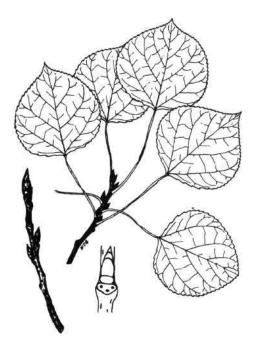
Large-Toothed Aspen – Similar to trembling Aspen only leaf has large course margin. Leaf stem also flat which causes quaking in a breeze. Tree bark is more yellowish in color than trembling Aspen. Best of the aspens for lumber and pulpwood.



**Balsom Poplar** — Balm of Gilead, tacamahac, are other common names of balsom poplar. Leaf is 3 to 6 inches long. Buds are brown and very resinous and fragrant.

#### EASTERN COTTONWOOD

(Populus deltoides)

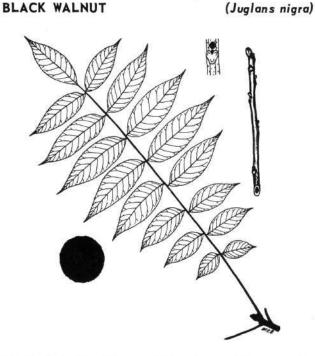


**Eastern Cottonwood** – Leaf heart to triangle shaped, 3 to 5 inches long. Planted as a street and shade tree. Tree grows fast and limited in use. Used for boxes, excelsior, crates, and baskets.



**Black Willow** – Grows along banks of streams and bottomlands close to water. Leaves lance shaped and 3 to 6 inches long. 1/4 to 5/8 inch wide. Small amounts of this wood are used for artificial limbs.

BUTTERNUT (Juglans cinered)



**Butternut** – Also known as white walnut. Leaves are 15 to 30 inches long, with 11 to 17 in. leaflets. Fruit is an oblong 2 – 2-1/2 inch nut. Tolerates more northernly climate than black walnut. Wood of very little value. Twigs have a chocolate colored chambered pith.

**Black Walnut** – Queen of American cabinet woods. Also used for gun stocks. Nuts are good for cakes and cookies. Leaves are 12 to 24 inches long. Twigs have a pale brown chambered center.

#### **BITTERNUT HICKORY**

(Carya cordiformis)

SHAGBARK HICKORY

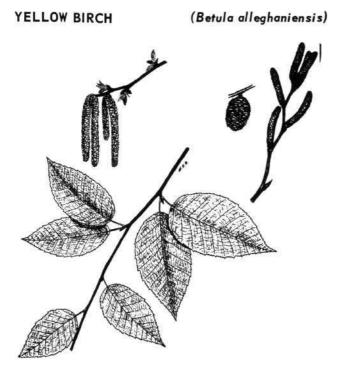
#### (Carya ovata)



**Bitternut Hickory** – At all seasons bitternut hickory can be identified by bright, yellow, granular buds. Leaves 6 to 10 inches long with 7 to 11 leaflets. Fruit too bitter to eat.



Shagbark Hickory – Stout twigs and gray bark which hangs loosely helps to identify this tree. Leaves 8 to 14 inches long with usually 5 leaflets. The nuts are edible. The wood makes good tool handles.



Yellow Birch – Most valuable of all birches. One of the principal members of the climax beech-birchmaple forest association. Identified by amber-yellow to silvery-yellowish-gray bark which peels off in thin film-like curls. Widely used for fancy veneer.



**Gray Birch** – Also called white birch and poplar birch. Leaves are triangle-shaped. 2 to 3 inches long. Bark is tight and chalky-white with dark triangularshaped blotches below branches.

#### PAPER BIRCH

(Betula papyrifera)

EASTERN HOPHORNBEAM

(Ostrya virginiana)



**Paper Birch** – Known as canoe birch and white birch. Creamy-white bark which peels off in thin papery layers exposing orange-colored inner bark. Wood used for toothpicks and spools.



**Eastern Hophornbeam** – Small tree distinguished by shreddy-appearing bark with shaggy plates which curve away from the trunk. Leaves similar to yellow birch. Wood is hard and tough, hence the common name "Ironwood." Used as an ornamental.



**Beech** – The "initial" tree because of the smooth gray bark which is easy to carve upon. Leaves turn a bronzed-brown color in the fall. Beechnuts are enjoyed by white tailed deer and grouse.



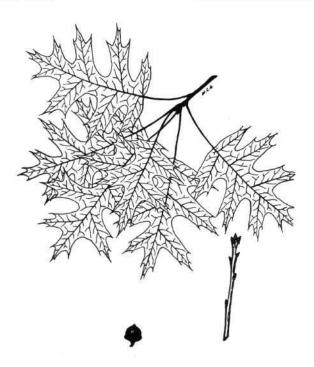
(Quercus rubra)



Northern Red Oak – Valuable shade tree along streets and about home grounds. Becomes a large tree 70 to 90 feet in height and 2 to 4 feet in diameter. Also valuable for furniture, cooperage and interior work.

PIN OAK

(Quercus palustris)



**Pin Oak** – Takes its name from the short, stiff, pinlike shoots with which its branches are studded. Attractive form, so used for ornamental purposes. Selected for shade tree use on highly acid soils.



**Black Oak** — Nearly black trunk with characteristic bright yellow inner bark. Uses are similar to red oak. Grows on dry or rocky slopes and ridges.



**Bur Oak** – Corky ridges on branchlets. Large acorns 1 to 2 inches with short stalks and having fringed margins. Also called overcup oak. Leaf almost divided in half by deep sinus.



(Quercus alba)



White Oak – One of the largest and most valuable trees growing in Michigan. Whiskey barrels, flooring and furniture are some uses. Leaves are 5 to 9 inches long with a smooth leaf margin.

(Quercus bicolor)

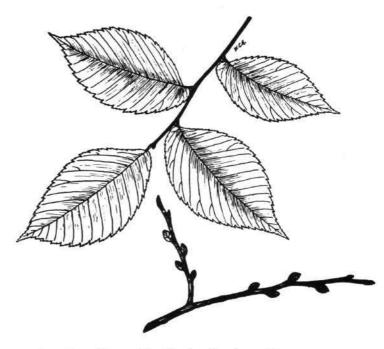
AMERICAN ELM

SLIPPERY ELM

(Ulmus rubra)



Swamp White Oak – Dark brownish bark of the branches peels off and exposes light colored inner bark. Similar to white oak but wood is more knotty.



American Elm – The "umbrella shaped" tree common along Michigan roadways. The Dutch elm disease is threatening to eliminate this tree particularly in lower Michigan. Leaves oval shaped, and two sides are unequal.



(Ulmus thomasii)



Rock Elm – Also called cork elm because of 1 to 4 parallel but discontinuous wings on branches. Leaves 21/2 to 41/2 inches long, pointed with unequal sides and smooth surface.



**Slippery Elm** - Leaves 4 to 7 inches long, oval shaped. Leaf surface very rough to touch. Inner bark "slippery."

#### HACKBERRY

(Celtis occidentalis)

#### RED MULBERRY

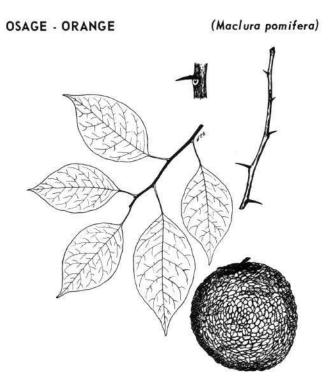
(Morus rubra)



**Hackberry** – Leaves alternate, 2 to 4 inches long. Also called sugarberry. Fruits are pea shaped, dark purplish in color with a sweet taste similar to dates.



**Red Mulberry** – Small tree seldom over 30 feet tall. The edible black fruit is enjoyed by robins, wood thrush, catbirds and cedar wax wings.



**Osage Orange** — Planted for hedge rows. Fruit resembles pale green oranges, 3 to 5 inches in diameter. Orange colored wood sometimes used for making archery bows.



**Tulip Tree** – Also called tulip poplar. Flowers resemble tulips so the name – tulip tree. Fine wood used for furniture, musical instruments, etc. Bees make excellent honey from the flower of this tree.

#### SASSAFRAS

(Sassafras albidum)

SYCAMORE



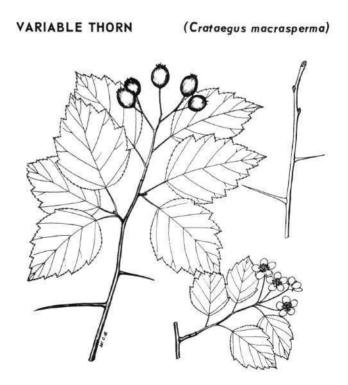
Sassafras — Noted for sassafras tea which is brewed from bark of roots. Three shaped leaves, unlobed, 3-lobed and 2-lobed or mitten shaped.



**Sycamore** — Mottled bark and scaly. Large leaf resembling a maple. Fruit, ball-shaped 1 inch in diameter on a slender stalk.



American Mountain Ash – Brilliant orange-red colored berries in clusters most characteristic of this tree. The fruit is enjoyed by many birds. An ornamental tree.



**Variable Thorn** – A shrub or small tree with white flowers in May. Branches thorny, pale brown with scaly bark.

#### WILD BLACK CHERRY

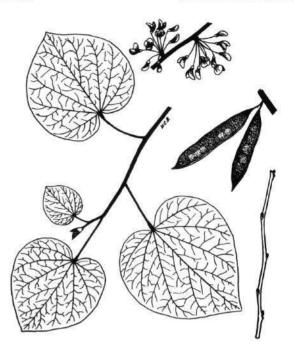
(Prunus serotina)

REDBUD



**Wild Black Cherry** – Valuable tree used for furniture, solidly or as a veneer. Fruits are purplish black and enjoyed by man and animal alike.

KENTUCKY COFFEE-TREE (Gymnocladus dioicus)



**Redbud** – Also called Judas tree. Tree is 15 to 30 feet in height. An ornamental tree which has a pretty lavender-rose pea-like blossoms near Easter time before leaves come out. Leaves are heart shaped.

Kentucky Coffee Tree – Leaves are alternate and twice compounded. The fruit is a broad thick, flattened, reddish-brown pod, 4 to 10 inches long. HONEY LOCUST

(Gleditsia triacanthos)



**Honey Locust** – Usually trunk and large branches have thick stout branched spines. Thornless variety planted for ornamental use. Fruit, like Kentucky coffee tree, is a 10 to 18 inch flat pod.

(Rhus typhina)

STRIPED MAPLE

BLACK MAPLE

(Acer pensylvanicum)

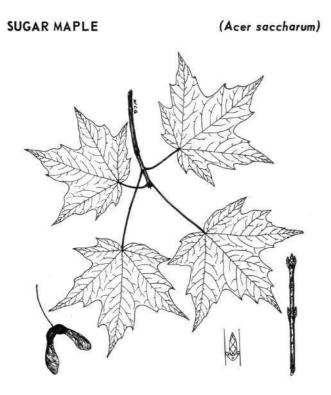
(Acer nigrum)



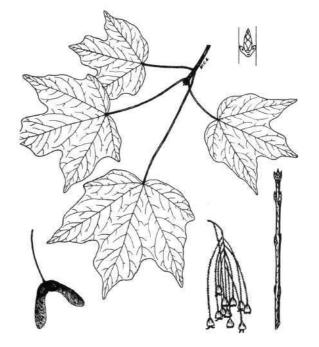
**Staghorn Sumac** — Stout, dense, velvety, twigs, makes this small tree resemble antlers of the male deer in velvet. Sumac seldom grows over 20 feet in height. Wood of no commercial value.



**Striped Maple** – Green to reddish brown bark with conspicuous whitish lines or streaks. Also called moosewood or goosefoot maple. Leaves are 5 to 6 inches long and nearly as broad.



**Sugar Maple** – The "maple syrup" tree. Also used in furniture, flooring, novelties, and spools and bobbins. Abnormalties may cause "curly maple" or birdseye maple grain which is valuable for cabinets.



**Black Maple** – Resembles sugar maple but bark is darker with leaves that droop and 3-lobed. Sugar maple and black maple lumber are both marketed as "hard maple."

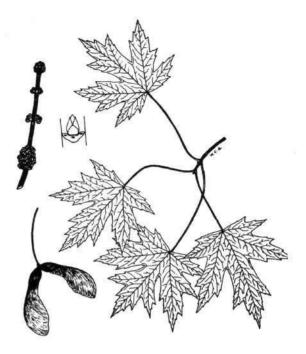
#### BOX-ELDER

(Acer negundo)

SILVER MAPLE



**Boxelder** – A unique maple because leaves are pinnately compound with 3 to 5 leaflets. Twigs are stout and purplish in color with a white bloom which is easily rubbed off,



Silver Maple – Extensively planted as an ornamental tree along streets. Leaf is silver on top side with white underneath, deeply 5-lobed. Fruits or samara are largest of maple  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches long.

RED MAPLE

(Acer rubum)

NORWAY MAPLE

(Acer platanoides)



**Red Maple** – Twigs are slender, and bright red in winter. Often called soft maple. Characteristically leaves are a brilliant red in fall.

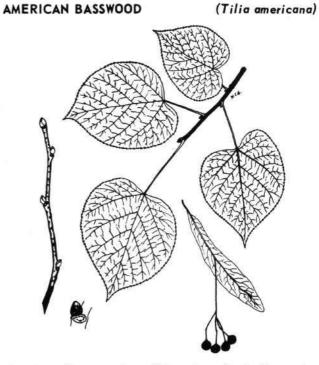


Norway Maple – A native of Europe. Planted in U.S. for shade tree use. Well adapted to city smoke and dusts. Holds leaves well into fall.

#### HORSE CHESTNUT

(Aesculus hippocastanum)

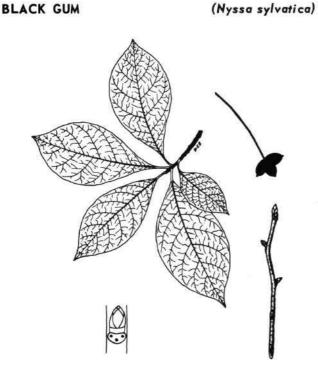
Horse Chestnut – "Buckeye" to many people. Planted as a shade tree. Fruit is a smooth lustrous brown nut. Leaflets are 4 to 6 inches long. Some superstitious people carry the nuts in their pockets to prevent rheumatism. Nuts are not edible.



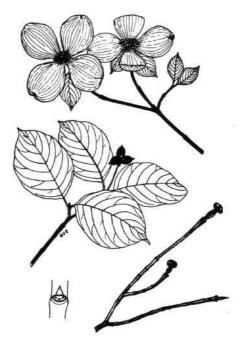
American basswood — "American linden" is the common name. Sprouts freely. Leaves are heart shaped and are 4 to 6 inches long. Makes excellent honey.

#### FLOWERING DOGWOOD

(Cornus florida)



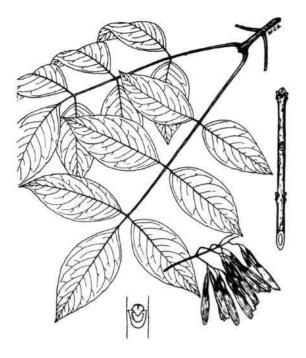
**Black Gum** – Also called black tupelo. Leaves are thick, 2 to 5 inches long with wedge-shaped bases. Leaves tend to cluster in fives.



Flowering Dogwood – A flowering tree seldom reaching any commercial size. Extensively planted as ornamental. Flowers shaped like a cross and blooms at Easter time.

#### WHITE ASH

(Fraxinus americana)



White Ash – Baseball bats, handles, snowshoes, and skis are common products made from this wood. A compound leaf with 5 to 9 leaflets (usually 7).



**Black Ash** – Leaves are 10 to 16 inches long with 7 to 11 (usually 9) leaflets. Occupies wet, low areas. Used for basket making, barrel hoops, etc.



Northern Catalpa – Large 4 to 8 inch leaf, 3 to 5 inches wide. Fruits are 8 to 15 inches long, banana shaped, but less than ½ inch in diameter. Sometimes used for fence posts.



White Poplar – Leaves are dark-green above, and silvery white beneath. Leaf under-surface is white and wooly. Also called silver leaf poplar. Often seen around old residences in the country.



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