

# Maine Tree Species Fact Sheet

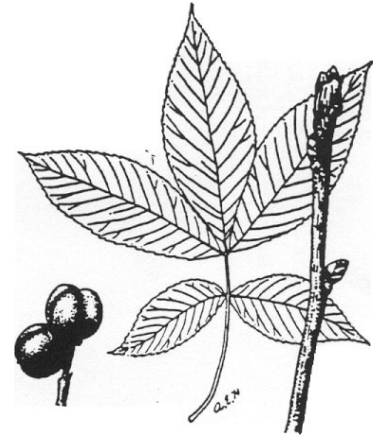
**Common Name:** Shagbark Hickory

**Botanical Name:** *Carya ovata*

**Tree Type:** Deciduous

## **Physical Description:**

**Growth Habit:** Shagbark hickory is a long-lived, slow-growing, and medium to large tree with shaggy gray brown bark that exfoliates in long plate like strips. The alternate compound leaves are 8-14 inches long with 5 leaflets, the three terminal leaflets being the largest. The leaflet margins are serrate. The twigs are hairy or smooth and olive gray to dark red-brown in color. Pith is star-shaped in cross section. Bud scales are hairy.



**Height:** Shagbark hickory reaches a height of 70 feet and a diameter of 2 feet.

**Shape:** Shagbark hickory has a cylindrical head and a straight, gradually tapering trunk.

## **Fruit/Seed Description/Dispersal Methods:**

Shagbark hickory is monoecious. Staminate flowers are borne on long-stalked catkins at the tip of old wood or in the axils of the previous season's leaves. Pistillate flowers occur in short terminal spikes in June. The fruit has a thick outer husk deeply grooved at the seams. The husk separates along those grooves when ripe, in October. The fruit is globose and borne singly or in pairs. Seeds are produced when the tree reaches approximately 40 years of age. Optimum seed production occurs between 60 and 200 years of age.

## **Range within Maine:**

Shagbark hickory occurs naturally or in cultivation statewide except in the north and Downeast. It is most commonly found in southern Maine on moist, but well-drained soil. This species is hardy to Zone 4.

## **Distinguishing Features:**

The bark breaks up in thin plates, which are free at the end and attached in the middle; the overall effect is a "shaggy" appearance. Bruised or crushed leaves have the faint aroma of apples.

## **Interesting Features:**

Shagbark hickory nuts are sweet and edible. They were once a staple food of some Native Americans and today are the important hickory nut of commerce.

The wood is tough, heavy, hard and resilient. The close-grained heartwood is reddish brown and the sapwood is nearly white. Wood was formerly used to make wheels and spokes for wagons, carriages and carts. Today the wood is used to make furniture, flooring, tool handles, ladders and sporting goods.

Hickory is also an excellent fuel wood. It has a high heat value and burns evenly with a long-lasting steady heat. The wood imparts a hickory-smoked flavor to foods and is often used to make charcoal.

### **Relationship to Wildlife:**

Shagbark hickory nuts are readily eaten by a wide variety of birds and mammals. Black bears consume large quantities of hickory nuts during the fall. This species also provides cover for a variety of birds and mammals and are probably used as den trees by squirrels.

### **Landscape Use:**

Important shade tree in some residential areas and is well suited for planting as a specimen tree in landscaping.

### **Common Problems of Pests of the Tree in Maine:**

Shagbark hickory is susceptible to numerous insects and diseases. Damage can be serious, particularly during drought years. Black bears are also likely to damage trees.

### **References:**

*Forest Trees of Maine, Twelfth Edition.* Maine Forest Service/Department of Conservation. 1995.

*Manual of Woody Landscape Plants, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition.* Dirr, Michael A. Publishing L.L.C. 1998.

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<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/tree/carova/all.html>

