



bitternut hickory

Carya cordiformis

Kingdom: Plantae
Division/Phylum: Anthophyta
Class:
Order:
Family:

FEATURES

The bitternut hickory is a deciduous tree that may grow to 75 feet tall with a diameter of two and one-half feet. The trunk is generally straight. The bark is brown and thin, separating into small scales or ridges. The distinctive bud is slender, hairy and mustard-yellow. The pinnately compound leaves are arranged alternately along the stem. Each leaf has seven to nine lance-shaped leaflets. The leaf is yellow-green and smooth above, lighter and usually hairy below. A leaf may be six inches long and about three inches wide. Male and female flowers are separate but located on the same tree. The flowers appear after the leaves have begun to unfold. The flower is tiny, without petals. Male (staminate) flowers are in catkins, while the female (pistillate) flowers are in groups of one or two. The fruit is a spherical nut, up to one and one-quarter inches in diameter. The husk on the nut is thin and yellowish, with four distinct ridges extending about halfway down the sides. The nut is somewhat flattened, and the seed is very bitter to the taste.

BEHAVIORS

The bitternut hickory may be found statewide in Illinois. It grows in bottomland woods, on dry hills and along roads. The bitternut, or yellow-bud, hickory flowers from May through June. Its heavy, dark wood is used for fuel and fence posts.

HABITATS

- bottomland forests
- coniferous forest
- southern Illinois lowlands
- upland deciduous forest

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: statewide

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter Resident:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 1999.
Biodiversity of Illinois, Volume 2: Woodland Habitats CD-ROM.