



pecan

Carya illinoensis

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

FEATURES

The deciduous pecan tree may grow to a height of 150 feet and a trunk diameter of three feet. Its bark is red-brown with platy scales. The pinnately compound leaves are arranged alternately along the stem. Each leaf has nine to 19 lance-shaped leaflets. Leaflets are double-toothed, yellow-green, smooth on the upper side and paler and smooth or hairy on the lower side. A leaflet may be eight inches long and three inches wide. Male and female flowers are separate but located on the same tree. The male (staminate) flowers are arranged in drooping, yellow-green catkins while the female (pistillate) flowers are in shorter spikes. Neither type of flower has petals. The fruit is an ellipsoid nut that is pointed at the tip and up to two inches long and one inch wide. Its thin husk has four wings. The nut is red-brown with black markings and has a thin shell. Its seed is sweet to the taste.

BEHAVIORS

The pecan may be found in the southern three-fourths of Illinois and along the Mississippi River. This tree grows in moist woods, particularly along rivers. The pecan flowers in April and May when its leaves are partly grown. Its hard, heavy wood is used for interior finishing, for making furniture, as fuel and for tool handles. The nuts provide food for wildlife and are used in cooking.

HABITATS

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

- common
- endangered
- threatened
- native
- exotic

ILLINOIS RANGE

Permanent resident: southern 3/4 + Mississippi River border counties

Summer resident:

Migrant:

Winter resident:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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