



American Hop Hornbeam

(Ostrya virginiana (Mill.) K. Koch.)

Also called “ironwood” or “leverwood.”

Location: The American Hop Hornbeam is found in the piedmont and western parts of North Carolina. It is found mostly as a scattered tree.

Shape: This tree is small and slender with a generally round-topped tree.

Bark: Light brown or reddish-brown and it is finely divided into thin layers that peel away from the trunk.

Leaves: Simple, alternate, and are generally oblong with narrowed tips and has sharp teeth along the outside. They range in length from 2 to 4 inches long.

Flowers: There are two kinds of flowers on this tree: the male, in drooping catkins (scaly spikes) which form the previous summer; and the female, in erect catkins on the newly formed twigs.

Fruit: Consists of a nutlet that is enclosed in an oval, flat, papery sac that is attached to the tree in cone-like clusters. The fruit makes good food for the wildlife.

Wood Type: Hardwood. The tree gets its common name from the hardness of the wood. It is strong, hard and durable. It is light brown to white with thick, pale sapwood.

Mature Height: 20 to 30 feet high

Mature Diameter: 7 to 10 inches

Uses: Tool handles, mallets, and other small articles. Several young hop hornbeams planted in a row can be pruned to develop an attractive hedge.

Reference: Holmes, J. S., & Holmes, J. S. (2015). *Common forest trees of North Carolina: A pocket manual*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Forest Service.