



Black Cherry

(*Prunus serotina Ehrh.*)

Also called “Wild Cherry”

Location: The black cherry grows in all parts of North Carolina but it grows best in the high mountains. It does not grow well on sites that are swampy or dry.

Shape: Forest-grown trees have long, limb-free trunks with little taper; open-grown trees have short trunks with many branches and irregular-spreading crowns.

Bark: The bark of young trees is thin, shiny, reddish brown, with horizontal markings made up of patches or rows of lenticels (lenticels are small openings in the bark of twigs; they are usually surrounded by rough, corky tissue.). The bark on older black cherry trees consists of small scaly plates with slightly upraised edges.

Leaves: 2 to 6 inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. They are narrowly oval or oblong and are pointed. Leaf edges are finely toothed with incurvate teeth. Leaves (and twigs) have a very strong odor of bitter almonds.

Flowers: The white flowers bloom when the leaves are about half-grown, occurring on stems 4 to 6 inches long.

Fruit: The cherries are dark red when they are fully developed and turn black with dark purple flesh as they ripen. The cherries are food for wild animals and birds.

Wood Type: Hardwood. The wood is reddish-brown with yellowish sapwood. It is moderately heavy, hard, strong, and fine-grained. Black cherry is valuable for its lustre and color.

Mature Height: 60 to 100 feet high

Mature Diameter: 1 to 5 feet

Uses: Furniture, interior finish, tools and tool handles. Cherry lumber is one of the most valuable in the eastern United States.

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