



# 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.