



Black Locust

(*Robinia pseudoacacia* L.)

Also called “Yellow Locust”

Location: The black locust is native only to the mountains of North Carolina although it is widely planted across the state. It is found as a forest tree only in the mountains. In other sections of the state, it usually grows in thickets on clay banks or waste places, or singularly along fence rows. The black locust grows on a variety of soils and is the most successful species for use in reclaiming spoil banks from mining operations.

Bark: The bark is dark brown, scaly, and thick with deep furrows.

Twigs: Twigs have paired spines, ½ to 1 inch long that arise adjacent to each leaf scar.

Leaves: 8 to 14 inches long and are pinnately compound. Each leaf is made up of seven to 19 oval alternate leaflets on the long slender central stem.

Flowers: The whitish flowers are very fragrant and hang in clusters on long stems.

Fruit: The black locust fruit is in the form of brown flat pods, each bearing four to eight kidney-shaped, dark orange-brown seeds. Most pods stay on the tree through the winter.

Sprouts, Seedlings, Seeds: Sprouts and seedlings are important food for cottontail rabbits and other browsing animals in winter, especially when snow accumulates. Many birds also eat black locust seeds.

Wood Type: Hardwood. It is yellow, coarse-grained, very heavy, very hard, strong and very resistant to decay.

Mature Height: 30 to 70 feet tall (can reach 80 feet)

Mature Diameter: 1 to 2 feet (can reach 3 to 4 feet)

Uses: Fence posts, poles, split rails, insulator pins, decking and in other places where hard, strong, decay-resistant wood is needed.

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