

Carya glabra Pignut Hickory¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

A North American native, Pignut Hickory is usually seen at 50 to 65 feet in height with a 30 to 40-foot-spread but is capable of slowly reaching 120 feet in the forest (Fig. 1). The deciduous, 6 to 12-inch-long leaves create a coarse, oval canopy, and the strong but irregularly-spaced branches resist breakage in storms, making it useful as a shade tree. The green fruits are quite bitter and are popular with various forms of wildlife, but not man. Since fruits may damage cars as they fall and people could roll on the fruit and lose their balance, it may be best to locate the tree away from streets, parking lots and other areas where cars regularly park. It makes a nice shade tree or median strip tree planted on 25 to 30-foot-centers and turns a striking bright yellow in the fall.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Carya glabra*

Pronunciation: KAIR-ee-uh GLAY-bruh

Common name(s): Pignut Hickory

Family: *Juglandaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 9 (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Uses: shade tree; specimen

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

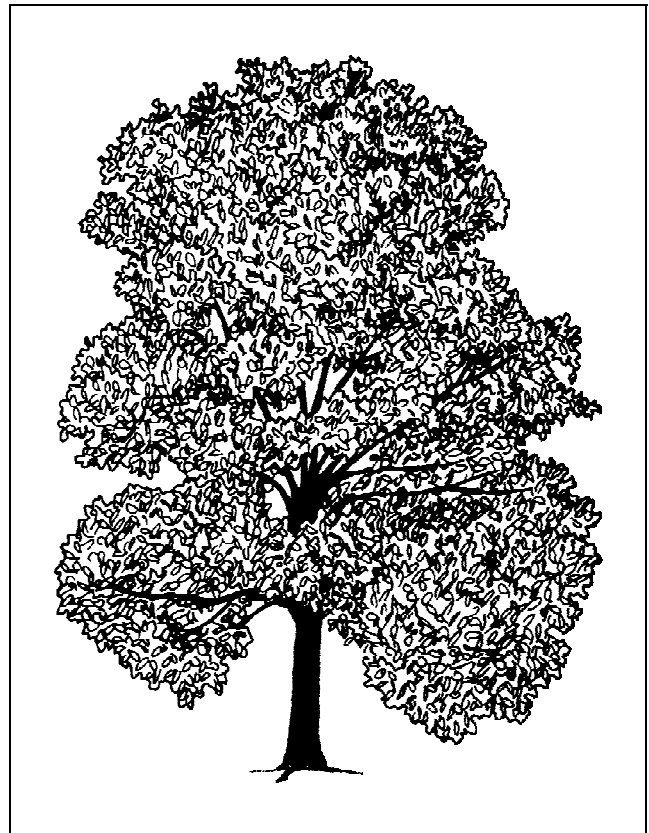


Figure 1. Mature Pignut Hickory.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 50 to 65 feet

Spread: 30 to 40 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: oval

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-121, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.
2. Edward F. Gilman, associate professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; Dennis G. Watson, associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.

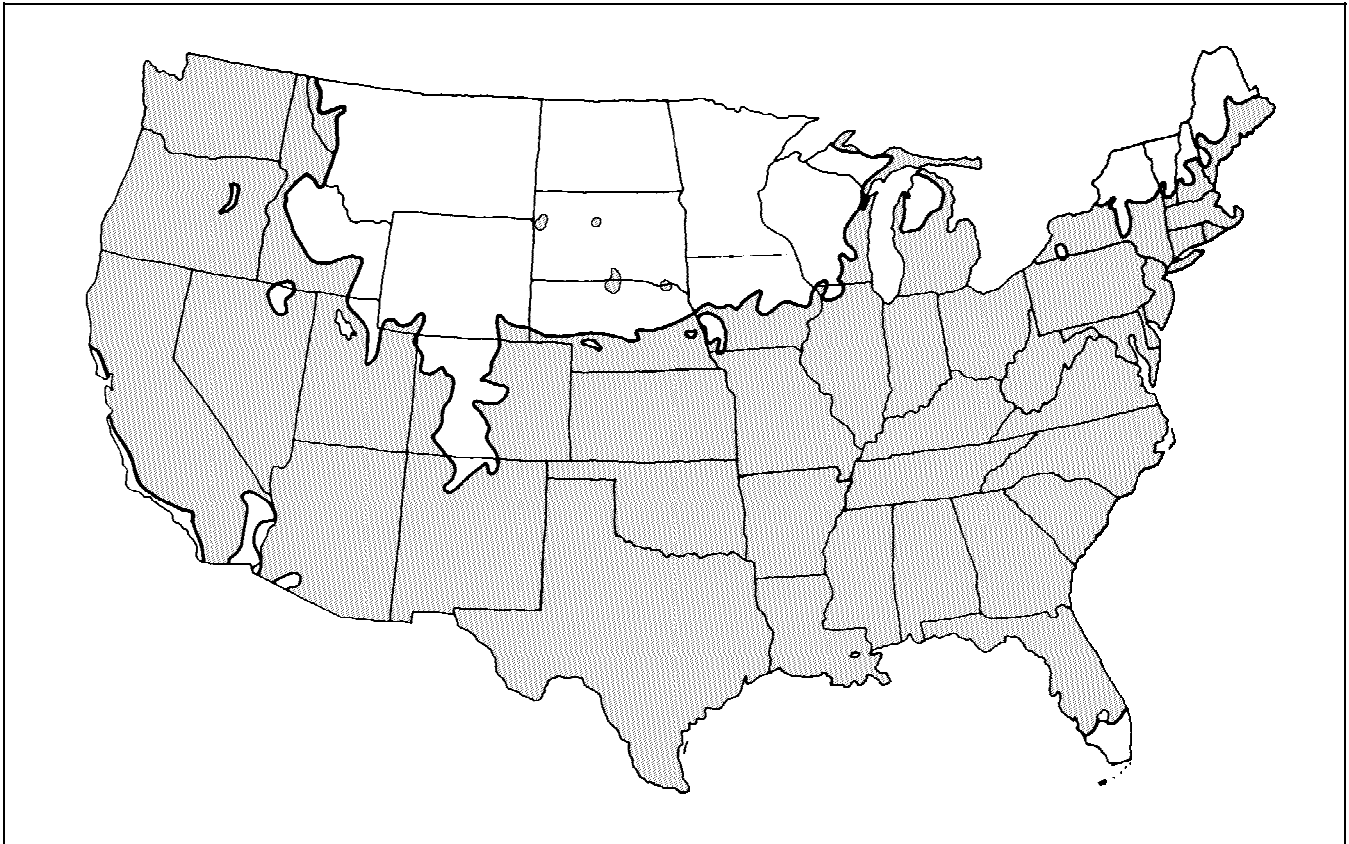


Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: medium

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: odd pinnately compound

Leaflet margin: serrate

Leaflet shape: lanceolate; obovate

Leaflet venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaflet blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: yellow

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval; round

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown; green

Fruit characteristics: attracts squirrels and other mammals; suited for human consumption; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: grow mostly upright and will not droop; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: thick

Wood specific gravity: 0.75

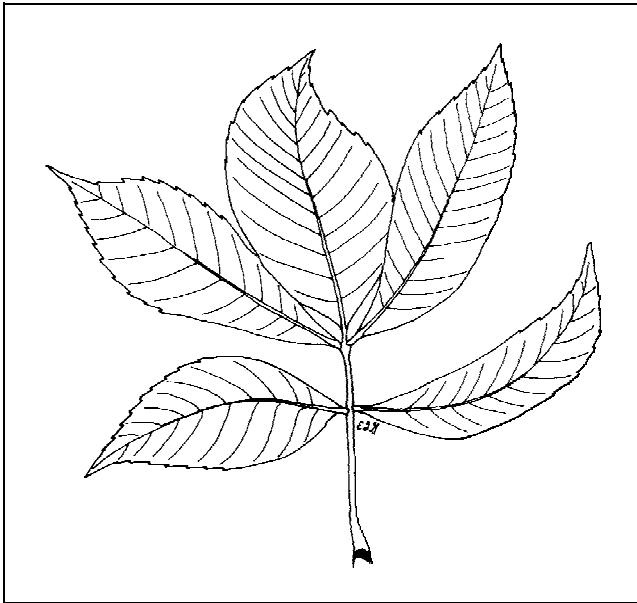


Figure 3. Foliage of Pignut Hickory.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun;
tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline;
acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: poor

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Ozone sensitivity: tolerant

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not
affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

Hickory generally grows with one central leader, and branches are well-spaced, forming a strong, wide angle with the trunk. The tree lends a coarse texture to the landscape which contrasts nicely with the smaller-leaved trees, such as the evergreen oaks. This is an under-utilized native tree with potential for much wider use.

Pignut Hickory grows best in sun or partial shade on well-drained, acid soils and is very drought-tolerant. Trees will show minor-element deficiencies on alkaline soils. It grows well in sand or clay,

sending deep roots down below the trunk in well-drained soil. Hickory wood is versatile and is used for chair legs, tool handles, including axes and hammers, and for smoking meat and fish.

Propagation is by stratified seed or root-sprouts.

Pests

Borers, bagworms, and fall webworms but none are normally serious. Fall webworms can devour large quantities of foliage during the summer and fall but they cause no lasting damage and control is not needed. Galls are common on the leaves but cause no real damage.

Hickory bark beetle is a problem, particularly during droughts.

Diseases

Scab.