

## ***Carya glabra* (Pignut Hickory)** **Walnut Family (Juglandaceae)**

### **Introduction:**

The hickory tree's strong yet flexible wood and excellence as fuel made it invaluable to pioneers. The pignut hickory offers lightly hung foliage in summer that casts a medium shade. In winter its open habit and bark are of interest. The hickory is particularly beautiful when winter buds open in late spring; the bud scales fold back, petal-like, as new foliage emerges. The tree attracts wildlife with nutritious nuts.

### **Culture:**

This very large, slow-growing species prefers well-drained to dry, fairly rich soil and full sun. Wild-grown hickories have deep tap roots that make them difficult to transplant. Also, it is worth noting that all hickories leaf out late in the spring.

Pignut hickory is best planted in a park-like area where its large size, leaf litter, fruit and twig drop will not be problems. Its savory nuts attract squirrels and other animals that may be unwanted in residential areas.

The hickory bark beetle may be a significant pest on this tree. Other pests may include canker worm, gall aphid and borers. Hickory is susceptible to leaf spot, powdery mildew and crown gall but is resistant to Verticillium wilt.

### **Additional Information:**

The genus name, *Carya*, is from the Greek name for walnut tree; the species name, *glabra*, means glabrous or smooth, referring to the foliage. Although only one hickory species exists outside of the eastern United States (in eastern China), in pre-glacial history, hickories covered all of Europe and the Mediterranean.

Pignut hickory has a small kernel with variable flavor, usually bitter and is fit to be eaten only by "pigs and other animals."

World champion trees can be found in Louisiana (165 feet and 120 feet) and Georgia (125 feet).



### **Botanical Characteristics:**

**Native habitat** - Central and eastern U.S.

**Growth habit** - This long-lived tree has a tapering trunk with an open, oval crown with slender branches.

**Tree size** - A slow-growing tree that can attain a height of 60 feet and a 25- to 35- foot spread. It can grow to 100 feet in the wild.

**Flower and fruit** - Male and female flowers are small, without petals and clustered in hanging catkins. Fruit is a thick-shelled 2 ½-inch nut in a green husk.

**Leaf** - An 8- to 14-inch-long compound leaf with five leaflets. The lowest two leaflets are one-third the size of the upper three leaflets. Fall color is golden yellow.

**Hardiness** - Winter hardy to USDA Zone 4.

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**Additional information continued:**

The wood of hickory is famously heavy and tough yet flexible and shock-resistant. Because of these qualities, it is often used in sporting equipment (skis, lacrosse sticks, bows for archery) and in tools (ax handles).

Hickory wood also has low conductivity of heat. This characteristic made hickory the wood of choice for wagon wheel hubs and today it is used in sulkies for harness horses.

Pignut hickory is stronger than steel, yet more elastic, less brittle and less conductive of heat. At one time it was used in the manufacture of cars.



Mature fruit