

Black Cherry

Prunus serotina var. *serotina*

Leaf Type: Deciduous

Texas Native: Yes No

Firewise: Yes No



Tree Description:

A large tree to 80 feet tall and a trunk 1 to 3 feet in diameter. Forest-grown trees have long clear trunks with little taper and an oval crown; open-grown trees have short trunks with many branches and an irregular, spreading crown.

Range/Site Description:

Occurs in East Texas on a variety of sites, but commonly found in fertile woods or along fencerows, burned areas, or disturbed sites where it is a pioneer species.

Leaf:

Simple, alternate, 2" to 6" long and 1" to 1.5" wide, oval or elliptical in shape, with very fine teeth along the margin; glossy and dark green above, pale green beneath, with tufts of brown hairs along the midrib.

Flower:

Drooping, cylindrical clusters of small, white flowers appear with the new leaves in spring.

Fruit:

A purplish-black, berry-like drupe, up to 0.5" in diameter, borne in long, hanging clusters. The fruit ripens in late summer and is edible, though slightly bitter.

Bark:

On branches and young trunks the bark is smooth, bright reddish-brown, and marked by conspicuous, narrow, horizontal lines called "lenticels;" older trunks develop small, flat, scaly plates; twigs have a bitter almond taste.

Wood:

Red-brown heartwood with yellowish sapwood, moderately heavy, hard, strong, fine-grained, and does not warp or split in seasoning; used for fine furniture, cabinets, veneer, interior trim, and printers blocks.

Similar Species:

Escarpment black cherry (*Prunus serotina* var. *eximia*) occurs in the Hill Country and the Edwards Plateau and tolerates alkaline soils; southwestern black cherry (*P. serotina* var. *rufula*) and southwestern chokecherry (*P. serotina* var. *virens*) occur in West Texas.

Interesting Facts:

With the exception of walnut, black cherry lumber has a greater value per board-foot than any other hardwood in the eastern United States.