

Pecan

Carya illinoensis

Secondary Names:

Pecan Hickory

Leaf Type: Deciduous

Texas Native: Yes No

Firewise: Yes No



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Tree Description:

A large tree to 120 feet tall and a trunk to 4 feet in diameter, with a broad, spreading crown when grown in the open. In wooded settings it grows tall and slender, with ascending branches and a tight, flat-topped crown.

Range/Site Description:

Occurs in rich, fertile bottomlands across most of the state, from the East Texas pineywoods throughout Central Texas and west to the Concho River valley. Planted widely as a landscape tree and in orchards for nut production.

Leaf:

Alternate, once-compound, 12" to 20" long, with 11 to 17 leaflets, each 4" to 8" long and up to 2" wide, lanceolate in shape, often falcate or inequilateral, finely-toothed and long-pointed; largest leaflets are typically towards the end of the leaf. Branches, twigs, and leaves lack thorns or prickles.

Flower:

Male and female flowers appear in early spring, separately on the same tree; male catkins are 3" to 6" long, female flowers in short spikes at the tips of the branches.

Fruit:

A large, cylindrical or oval nut, 1" to 2" long and up to 1" in diameter, enclosed in a thin husk which opens along grooved seams when the fruit ripens in the fall. The nuts vary considerably in size and thickness of shell and are rich in protein, oil, and minerals.

Bark:

Gray-brown and smooth at first, later breaking into thin scales that flake as the bark grows older, developing a rough texture of narrow, flat ridges and shallow fissures on older trunks.

Wood:

Heavy, hard, brittle, not strong, used for flooring and cooking wood, especially for barbeques. The tree is cultivated widely for its nuts, and many varieties have been developed and are sold in large quantities.

Similar Species:

Water hickory (*Carya aquatica*) grows on very wet sites in East Texas and has narrow leaves and a small, flattened nut; black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) has more leaflets, leaves that are pubescent underneath, and a large, round fruit without seams on the husk.

Interesting Facts:

Pecan is the state tree of Texas.