

BLACK LOCUST

Robinia pseudacacia L.

OTHER COMMON NAMES: Yellow locust, Locust, Acacia.

FORM: 70-80 feet high, trunk 3-4 feet in diameter, bole divides a few feet above ground into a number of stout ascending branches, forming a narrow, oblong, open crown; in the forest, bole may be free of branches three-fourths of its length.

BARK: Mature bark 1-1 1/2 inch thick, reddish or yellowish-brown, deeply furrowed into rounded ridges covered with squarish persistent scales.

TWIGS: Slender or rather stout on vigorous growth, brittle, more or less zigzag, terete, or angular in cross section, often two stipular thorns at a node.

LEAVES: Alternate, odd-pinnately compound, 8-14 inches long, consisting of 7-19 sub-opposite or alternate leaflets arranged on a rachis swollen at the base, leaflets ovate-oblong to elliptical, 1 1/2-2 inches long, mucronate or retuse at apex, rounded at base, entire, dark blue-green and glabrous.

FLOWERS: Appear when the leaves are nearly full grown, perfect, irregular, white, fragrant, about 1 inch long, borne on slender pedicels in drooping racemes 4-5 inches long.

FRUIT: A dark brown, thin pod, 2-4 inches long, about 1/2 inch wide, usually containing 4-8 small orange-brown, mottled seeds about 3/16 of an inch long.

WINTER BUDS: Terminal bud absent; lateral buds small, 3-4 at a node, superposed, imbedded in the twig under the leaf scar.

WOOD: Very hard, heavy, strong, very durable, brown or greenish-yellow, pale yellow sapwood.

USES: Historical uses: Posts, insulator pins, tree nails, railroad ties, ship building, tool handles.

HABITAT: Moist, fertile soil, especially rich bottom-lands, along stream courses in rocky, gravelly, or alluvial soils.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS: Its odd-pinnate compound leaves; twigs with two spines at a node; winter buds superposed, imbedded in the twig; drooping raceme of white, irregular flowers; yellow color and disagreeable odor of the roots.

DISTRIBUTION IN ALABAMA: Its natural range seems to be from the northernmost counties southward into Autauga County; black locust has been planted as an ornamental rather widely in Alabama and has escaped cultivation; hence, the range of the species is not well known.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE

1. A fruiting branch
2. A legume with one of the valves removed
3. Vertical section of a seed
4. An embryo
5. A portion of a branch, the petiole removed and the bud covering laid open, showing the superposed naked buds, with a portion of a branchlet developed from a supra-axillary bud
6. A winter branchlet



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