PLANT FACT SHEET

Carya ovata (Mill.) K. Koch

GENUS *Carya* **FAMILY** Juglandaceae

COMMON NAMES Shagbark hickory, Shellbark hickory, Upland hickory

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Nuts, Seeds, Sap, Oil

The seeds are eaten.
They can be boiled or baked and used in cornbread. They are added to soups.
The oil can be prepared by boiling the crushed nuts slowly and skimming off the oil.

DESCRIPTION

A tall deciduous tree. It grows to 24-30 m high. It has a long straight trunk. The trunk can be 60 cm across. The crown is high and narrow. The bark is grey to brown and peels in long plates. The leaves are large and rich shiny green. They are 15-25 cm long. They have 5 broad leaflets. The leaflets are widest in the middle and taper to both ends. They are finely toothed. The leaves turn golden yellow in autumn. The flowers are separately male and female. The pollen flowers are in branched catkins at the base of new shoots. The female or seed flowers are in small clusters at the tips of new shoots. The fruit are almost round and 3-5 cm long. They occur singly or in pairs. The husk is thick and woody but the shell of the nuts is thin. The kernel is sweet and edible.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It is native to E. North America. A hardy tree. It can grow on poor soils. It can stand hard winters. It does best on rich, moist soils. It suits hardiness zones 4-9. Arboretum Tasmania.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Seeds that sink should be used for planting. They can be stored for some time at 0°C. Seedlings grow slowly for 2-3 years. They do not transplant easily.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees are slow growing. Trees are long lived. They can live for 200-300 years. Nuts for eating are dried for a few weeks.

NOTES

There are about 14-25 Carya species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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