

# School-to-Nature



## Shagbark Hickory Tree

(Also called Shellbark Hickory, Scaly-bark Hickory, Upland Hickory)

Shagbark Hickory is a member of the Walnut family. It is native to eastern North America. It has been grown commercially, and used in landscaping, as well as growing naturally in old-growth woods. It gets its name, of course, from the way the beautiful bark grows in downward-sweeping forms on mature trees. It is slow-growing, reaching maturity in 40 years; but it can easily live 200-300 years, reaching 80-100 feet high with a width of about 30 feet. It grows a long taproot that helps it to survive droughts and wind storms.



The mature tree produces flowers in spring encased in reddish leaves, which can be spotted high up in the woods. The flowers have male and female parts, and produce hickory nuts. In autumn, shagbark hickory leaves turn bright shades of yellow and gold as shown in the photo above.



Shagbark Hickory thrives in climates from very cold to quite warm, preferring 20-40 inches of rainfall during the year; but it can also contract diseases when surroundings are continuously damp. Volunteers are watching the Hickory trees on Conservancy lands for signs of a fungal disease, a current concern.



Hickory wood is used commercially in creating tool handles and other equipment. Barbecue enthusiasts use hickory wood for the wonderful smoked flavor it imparts to meat. Hickory wood is very hard, making it a good firewood source.

Native Americans as well as early farmers relied on the sweet-tasting nuts as a food staple for overwintering. Many animals rely on hickory nuts for food: squirrels, turkeys, and quail. Raccoons, mice, foxes and deer use the new leaves and twigs as food. Birds nest in the trees, and bats have even been found sheltering under the bark. It's a wonderful tree that we're lucky to have on CC lands.

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