

BALSAM POPLAR (*populus balsamifera*)



A. Identification:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leaves---alternate and are simple, finely serrated, shiny dark green ---the leaf stalk (petiole) is long with glands at the leaf base
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flowers-male and female are hanging, long, pale green catkins with come out in May
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fruit----is small, 2- valved, dry capsules which has many small seeds ----the males shed promptly and decay while the females shed after dispersal is complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bark----greenish brown when young but becomes gray and deeply furrowed with age
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wood---is light, soft, and low in strength and it is white to grayish brown in color
B. Distribution / Location: from Alaska to Labrador and Newfoundland
C. Habitat:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • found mostly in river valleys and also on moist, rich, low-lying ground • grows in pure stands or mixed stands with balsam fir, black spruce, white spruce, and white birch
D. Growing characteristics:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • medium-sized trees grow up to 25 m high and 50 cm in diameter and up to 70 years old • often is the largest tree in the north and west parts of its range
E. Reproduction:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • production begins at about 8 years with a good crop every year • dispersal is by wind before leaves come out and within 200 m of the parent tree • seeds remain viable 2-4 weeks but will begin growing upon landing on a suitable, moist, mineral soil • vegetative reproduction can come from root suckers, stumps, sprouts, stems,
F. Uses:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • traditional--burns well, used to make friction fire set and was used to make a cleanser for hair and buckskin clothing --used by Thompson people to produce soap from the inner bark --Native Americans used resin from buds to treat sore throats, coughs, lung pain, and rheumatism. --an ointment “Balm of Gilead” was made from winter buds and was used to relieve congestion • modern----buds have a waxy resin with disinfectant properties and are still used in modern, natural health ointments ----bees use the resin to seal off intruders like mice which might decay and infect the hive ----used for pulpwood, lumber, veneer, high grade paper, particle board, boxes, crates, and tissue

G. Fun facts:

- When you squeeze the buds between your fingers you will see how sticky they are and you can smell the balsam fragrance.

Bibliography:

<http://www.borealforest.org/trees/tree11.htm>

http://www.domtar.com/arbre/english/album_photo/p_pbaul.htm

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<http://www.rook.org/earl/bwca/nature/trees/populusbal.html>