

Common Trees of the Chicagoland Region

Created by Logan Novak for Plants of Concern

This guide is in no way a complete guide of the tree species in the Chicagoland region, but was created to help discern common species.

1. Tree that has needles
 2. Has bright green needles that fall off in autumn... **Larix laricina**
 2. Has silver-blue needles that don't fall off annually... **Juniperus virginiana**
1. Deciduous tree that loses its broad leaves during the winter-months
 2. Leaves simple
 3. Leaves lobed
 4. Leaves have shallow lobes... **Quercus bicolor**
 4. Leaves have combination of deep and shallow lobes... **Quercus macrocarpa**
 4. Leaves have deep lobes
 5. Leaves have rounded edges... **Quercus alba**
 5. Leaves have sharp edges
 6. Lobes asymmetrical on both sides of leaf... **Quercus palustris**
 6. Lobes symmetrical on both sides of leaves
 7. Bottom of leaves hairy... **Quercus velutina**
 7. Bottom of leaves hairless
 8. Bottom of leaves silvery... **Acer saccharinum**
 8. Bottom of leaves not silvery
 9. Has paired winged seeds
 10. Leaves dark red or dark green with red stalks... **Acer rubrum**
 10. Leaves dark green with yellow stalks... **Acer saccharum**
 9. Has acorns
 10. Leaves have 5-9 lobes **Quercus coccinea**
 10. Leaves have 7-11 lobes **Quercus rubra**
 4. Leaves unlobed
 5. Leaf edges smooth
 6. Leaf shape is oval, mitten, or double-thumb mitten... **Sassafras albidium**
 6. Heart-shaped leaves and many bright pink flowers in May... **Cercis canadensis**
 5. Leaf edges serrated
 6. Leaves singly serrated
 7. Leaves heart shaped and asymmetrical at base... **Tilia americana**
 7. Leaves oval-shaped
 8. Leaves symmetrical at base
 - Bark is gray with white speckles... **Prunus virginiana**

- Bark is dark gray with scales...
 - 8. Leaves asymmetrical at base
 - Leaves have at least 2 forked lateral veins...
 - Leaf veins usually without any forked lateral veins...
 - 7. Leaves triangular
 - 8. Leaves very finely serrated with rounded points...
 - 8. Leaves larger serrate with a large pointed tip...
 - 6. Leaves doubly serrated
 - 7. Branches have 1-2 inch long thorns...
 - 7. Branches do not have thorns
 - 8. Bark is white and peels in sheets...
 - 8. Bark is gray and can form vertical peeling strips...
 - 8. Bark is blue-gray and has long vertical ridges...
- Prunus serotina**
- Ulmus americana**
Ulmus rubra
- Populus tremuloides**
Populus deltoides
- Crataegus mollis**
- Betula papyrifera**
Ostrya virginiana
Carpinus
- caroliniana**
- 2. Leaves compound
 - 3. Leaf edges serrated
 - 4. Leaves alternate
 - 5. Bark peels in large vertical strips...
 - 5. Bark has deep vertical ridges...
 - 5. Bark is either smooth or scaly...
 - 4. Leaves opposite
 - 5. Has 3-5 leaflets...
 - 5. Has 5-11 leaflets
 - 6. Does not have leaflet stalks...
 - 6. Has leaflet stalks
 - 7. Leaf underside whiteish...
 - 7. Leaf underside same color as top of leaf...
- Carya ovata**
Juglans nigra
Carya cordiformis
- Acer negundo**
- Fraxinus nigra**
- Fraxinus americana**
Fraxinus pennsylvanica
- 3. Leaf edges smooth
 - 4. Branches covered in long thorns...
 - 4. Branches without thorns
 - 5. Leaves alternate...
 - 5. Leaves opposite...
- Gleditsia triacanthos**
- Robinia pseudoacacia**
Fraxinus quadrangulata

Quercus rubra (Northern Red Oak)- leaves simple and alternate, deeply lobed leaves with pointed edges, top of leaf not glossy, lighter green on bottom of leaf than top of leaf



Photo by: the_fabulous_frogs found on iNaturalist

Quercus alba (White Oak)- leaves simple and alternate, deeply lobed leaves with rounded edges, 7-11 lobes, leaves hairless



Photo by: juliebags found on iNaturalist

Tilia americana (Basswood)- heart-shaped leaves that are uneven on either side and finely-toothed, leaves unlobed and finely hairy on undersides



Photo by: benthehen found on iNaturalist

Populus deltoides (Eastern Cottonwood)- leaves alternate, simple, heart-shaped but more triangular with serrated edges and a pointed tip, bark is gray with deep ridges



Photo by: juliebags found on iNaturalist

Prunus serotina (Black Cherry)- simple alternate leaves, oval-shaped with finely-serrated edges, scaly dark gray bark



Photo by: taco2000 found on iNaturalist

Acer saccharum (Sugar Maple)- leaves simple and alternate, leaves have 3-5 medium lobes, bark is dark gray and has ridges or can be scaly



Photo by: bouteloua found on iNaturalist

Carya ovata (Shagbark Hickory)- alternate compound leaves with 5-7 leaflets, leaves have finely-serrated edges, leaves are oval-shaped that taper with a pointed tip, bark is gray and peels in long flat plates



Photo by: jetteth found on iNaturalist

Quercus macrocarpa (Bur Oak)- shallow to deeply lobed leaves with rounded edges, bottom of leaves have soft white hairs, leaves simple and alternate, bark has deep grooves



Photo by: observer26 found on iNaturalist

Ostrya virginiana (American Hophornbeam)- simple alternate leaves, doubly-serrated leaves with fine teeth and very fine teeth, oval-shaped leaves with pointed tip, bark is gray-brown and forms vertical peeling strips



Photo by: wildernessbarbie found on iNaturalist

Ulmus americana (American Elm)- leaves alternate, oval-shaped with a pointed tip and serrated edges, leaves asymmetrical at the base



Photo by: betrand_leclercq found on iNaturalist

Quercus velutina (Black Oak)- leaf shape similar to maple leaf with much deeper lobes, leaf edges pointed, top of leaves shiny and bottom of leaves hairy



Photo by: elfaulkner found on iNaturalist

Juglans nigra (Eastern Black Walnut)- alternate compound leaves, each leaf is 1-2 feet long, leaflets are oval-shaped and finely-serrate with a pointed tip, leaves have a strong smell when crushed



Photo by: woodridgejeff found on iNaturalist

Quercus bicolor (Swamp White Oak) - similar leaf shape to *Quercus alba* with much shallower lobes, bottom of leaves lighter than tops, bottom of leaves hairy



Photo by: hikebikerun13 found on iNaturalist

Acer negundo (Boxelder Maple)- compound leaves with 3,5, or 7 leaflets per leaf, leaves are asymmetrically toothed on either side (similar to poison-ivy), leaves opposite, bark has shallow grooves



Photo by: vvoelker found on iNaturalist

Populus tremuloides (Trembling Aspen)- bark is grayish-white and grows ridges as the tree ages, alternate simple leaves, oval-shaped leaves with finely-serrated edges, resembles *Betula papyrifera* in color but the bark does not peel like in *Betula*



Photo by: randomrover88 found on iNaturalist

Acer saccharinum (Silver Maple)- simple opposite leaves, leaves are 5 lobed with pointed lobes, leaves are silvery on undersides



Photo by: elfaulkner found on iNaturalist

Fraxinus americana (White Ash)- opposite compound leaves, leaves have 5-9 leaflets, bark is light gray with deep grooves, leaves purple-ish in fall, leaves have white-ish undersides



Photo by: janetwright found on iNaturalist

Fraxinus pennsylvanica (Green Ash)- opposite compound leaves, leaves have 5-9 leaflets, bark is light gray with deep grooves, leaves yellow-green in fall, leaves green all over



Photo by: elfaulkner found on iNaturalist

Fraxinus nigra (Black Ash)- compound leaves that are opposite with 7-11 leaflets per leaf, stems of leaves covered with dense hairs, bark is light gray and flakey, leaves dark green in summer changing to purple-ish in fall



Photo by: elfaulkner found on iNaturalist

Carya cordiformis (Bitternut Hickory)- Alternate compound leaves with 7-11 leaflets, leaflets are lance-shaped with finely-serrated edges, gray-green bark with thin grooves that becomes scaly with age



Photo by: cjosefson found on iNaturalist

Ulmus rubra (Slippery Elm)- simple alternate leaves, finely-serrated edges and deep prominent veins, leaf halves are asymmetrical at the base, bark is gray with ridges



Photo by: jrebman found on iNaturalist

Quercus coccinea (Scarlet Oak)- deeply lobed leaves with sharp edges, leaf lobes symmetrical on both sides of leaf, bottom of leaves hairless



Photo by: bancroft2 found on iNaturalist

Larix laricina (Tamarack)- has soft deciduous needles that are bright green in summer, yellow in the autumn and then fall off, bark is flaky and red-brown, darker inner bark is visible between the scales



Photo by: skrentnyjeff found on iNaturalist

Celtis occidentalis (Common Hackberry)- simple alternate leaves, oval-shaped serrated leaves with pointed tip, bark in young trees is smooth but becomes bumpy and ridged with age



Photo by: hikebikerun13 found on iNaturalist

Carpinus caroliniana (American hornbeam) -leaves simple and alternate, double serrated edges (fine serrate and very fine serrate), leaves ovate with a pointed tip, fruits are light brown nutlets with resemblance to hops that mature in October, bark blue-gray with long ridges



Photo by: sanguinaria33 found on iNaturalist

Robinia pseudoacacia (Black Locust)- leaves alternate and compound, each leaf can grow up to one foot long, leaflets are oval-shaped with pointed tips and appear blueish-green



Photo by: elfaulkner found on iNaturalist

Juniperus virginiana (Eastern Juniper)- evergreen needles are prickly and silver-blue or bronze-green in winter, bark is flaky and reddish-brown



Photo by: funkyfivemama found on iNaturalist

Crataegus mollis (Downy Hawthorne)- simple alternate leaves, edges doubly-toothed (both finely-serrate and very finely-serrate), leaves are very hairy immediately after emerging, bark is gray and can be shaggy in older trees, 1-2 inch long thorns on branches



Photo by: elfaulkner found on iNaturalist

Acer rubrum (Red Maple)- leaves are dark red immediately after emerging but alternate to dark green, leaves simple and alternate, leaves have 3-5 lobes, leaf stalks red, young trees have smooth gray bark and older trees have scaly plates oriented vertically



Photo by: evan8 found on iNaturalist

Betula papyrifera (Paper Birch)-leaves are simple and alternate, leaves have doubly-serrated edges, bark is white and peels very easily, long black pores found on bark



Photo by: barju486 found on iNaturalist

Sassafras albidum (Sassafras)- simple alternate leaves, 3 possible leaf shapes: mitten-shaped, oval-shaped, or mitten-shaped with two 'thumbs', leaf edges are smooth, bark is reddish-gray and has grooves



Photo by: skrentnyjeff found on iNaturalist

Prunus virginiana (Chokecherry)- leaves are alternate, oval-shaped with a pointed tip and simple, undersides of leaves green-gray, leaves have finely-serrated edges, bark is gray with white speckles



Photo by: sanguinaria33 found on iNaturalist

Fraxinus quadrangulata (Blue Ash)- leaves are compound and opposite, 5-11 leaflets per leaf, leaflets are oval-shaped with smooth edges and a pointed tip, bark is smooth and divided into sections



Photo by: sanguinara33 found on iNaturalist

Gleditsia triacanthos (Honeylocust)- leaves compound and alternate, leaves can be branched containing two sets of leaflets (otherwise known as bipinnately compound) or only one set of leaflets (pinnately compound), young trees have red-gray bark and older trees have brown-gray bark, all woody parts of the plant are covered in long thorns



Photo by: morganable found on iNaturalist

Quercus palustris (Pin Oak)- deeply lobed leaves with sharp edges, leaf lobes asymmetrical on either side of the leaf, medium green leaves, bark smooth gray with shallow ridges that develop with age, leaf lobes have multiple points



Photo by: sanguinaria33 found on iNaturalist

Cercis canadensis (Eastern Redbud)- simple alternate leaves, symmetrical heart-shaped leaves, edges are smooth not serrated, in May produces clusters of red-pink flowers, bark is brown but the inner layer is orange, old bark sheds which can reveal this orange layer



Photo by: skrentnyjeff found on iNaturalist

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