

Dichotomous Key for Identifying Common Landscape Trees in Arkansas

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This key is designed as a simple visual tool to identify common trees growing in Arkansas. It should be emphasized that plants encompass a population of individuals so specific morphological traits mentioned will vary between individuals. Traits mentioned are average or typical.

*= native to Arkansas

A. Broadleaf (versus Needles)

1. Simple (versus Compound)

a. Opposite (versus alternate)

- Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*) – milky sap from petiole
- Silver Maple (*Acer saccharinum*)* - underside of leaf silvered
- Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*)* - primarily 5 pointed lobes
- Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)* - primarily 3 pointed lobes
- Northern Catalpa (*Catalpa speciosa*)* - white flowers late April
- Southern Catalpa (*Catalpa bignonioides*)* - white flowers late May
- Royal Paulownia/Princess Tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*) – purple flowers
- Eastern flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*)*

b. Alternate (versus opposite)

1. Deciduous (lose leaves in fall)

- Southern Hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*)* - pea-sized fruit
- Black Tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*)*
- Callery Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)
- White Mulberry (*Morus alba*)*
- Chinese Parasol Tree (*Firmiana simplex*)
- Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)*
- Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*)
- Saucer Magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangiana*)
- Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)*
- Willow Oak (*Quercus phellos*)*
- Shingle Oak (*Quercus imbricaria*)*
- Water Oak (*Quercus nigra*)*
- Blackjack Oak (*Quercus marilandica*)*
- Spanish Oak (*Quercus falcata*)*

- Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*)*
- Shumard Oak (*Quercus shumardii*)*
- Scarlet Oak (*Quercus coccinea*)*
- Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*)*
- Swamp White Oak (*Quercus bicolor*)
- Chinkapin Oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*/*Q. prinoides*)*
- White Oak (*Quercus alba*)*
- Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*)*
- Post Oak (*Quercus stellata*)*
- London Planetree (*Platanus x acerifolia*) – bark puzzle-like to ground;

2 fruit ‘balls’ per stalk

Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)* – bark puzzle-like higher in crown;

1 fruit ‘ball’ per stalk

- Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)*
- Tuliptree; Tulip-poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)*
- River Birch (*Betula nigra*)*
- Poplar (*Populus* sp.)
- Lacebark Elm; Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*)
- Winged Elm (*Ulmus alata*)*
- Zelkova (*Zelkova serrata*)
- Basswood (*Tilia americana*)*
- Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)*
- Willow (*Salix alba*)

2. Broadleaf evergreen (leaves NOT needle-like and do not drop in fall)
 - Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*)
 - Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*)

2. Compound (versus simple)

a Palmately compound (leaves opposite)

- Common Horsechestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) (5 leaflets)
- Ohio Buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*)*
- Red Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*)*

b. Pinnately compound

1. Simple pinnately compound

- A. Leaf arrangement opposite**
 - White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*)*
 - Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*)*

B. Leaf arrangement alternate

- Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)
- Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*)*
- Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*)*
- Water Hickory (*Carya aquatica*)*
- Bitternut Hickory (*Carya cordiformis*)*

2. Bi- or tri-pinnately compound

- Common Honeylocust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*)*
- Albizia/Mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*)
- Goldenraintree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*)

B. Needles (versus a broadleaf like an oak or maple)

1. Evergreen needles (versus deciduous)

a. needles 2" or longer

1. needles mostly in pairs (2) per bundle
 - a. needles 4-6" long
 - Austrian Pine (*Pinus nigra*)
 - b. needles 2-3" long
 - Scotch Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*)
2. needles 5 per bundle
 - White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)
3. needles 3 (or 2) per bundle
 - Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*)
 - Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*)*

b. needles 2" or shorter

1. needles do not roll easily between fingers
 - White Fir (*Abies concolor*)
2. needles roll easily between fingers
 - Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*)
 - Colorado Spruce (*Picea pungens*)
 - Deodar Cedar (*Cedrus deodara*)
 - Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*)

2. Deciduous needles (lose leaves/needles in the fall)

a. needles in flat sprays

1. 'sprays' of foliage (like a feather) opposite
 - Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)
2. 'sprays' of foliage alternate
 - Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)*

b. needles held in a bundle (like a paint brush)

- Larch (*Larix decidua*) [might confuse w/ *Cedrus*]