

# *Robinia pseudoacacia* - Black Locust (*Leguminosae*)

*Robinia pseudoacacia* is an urban-tolerant, U.S. native shade or street tree. Black Locust is known for fragrant, showy, white inflorescences in late May, quick growth in stressful situations, upright columnar habit, and often as a pioneer invader species.

## FEATURES

### Form



- large tree
  - to 50' tall x 25' wide
  - upright with a single trunk that quickly yields a few major upright branches
  - rapid growth rate
- ### Culture
- full sun to partial shade
  - very urban tolerant, especially in its adaptability to poor soils
  - does not tolerate poor

### drainage

- rare in the trade; when available, B&B or bare root

### Foliage

- dark blue-green
- deciduous
- alternate
- pinnately compound
- leaf 1-2' long, leaflets may be notched at apex
- autumn color yellowish green to green

### Flowers

- white; late May to early June
- pendulous inflorescences that are showy white and fragrant but last only a couple of weeks
- to 8" long
- tree flowering at a young age

### Fruits

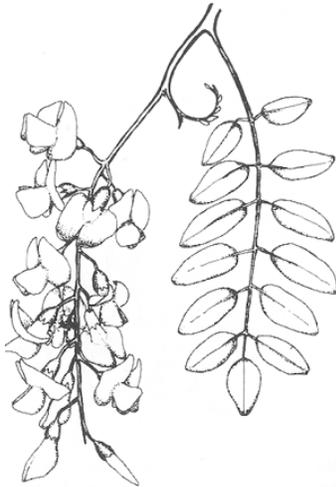
- green flat pods to 4" long, turning brown and persisting into early winter

### Twigs

- olive-brown changing to brown
- fairly slender
- zigzag
- borne with single or double prickles at some nodes

### Trunk

- single-trunked with several upright branches
- light brown
- becoming lightly furrowed in youth then deeply ridged and furrowed with age



- crisscrossing ridges and brown-orange interior furrows are a trait of an old tree

## USAGE

### Function

- native pioneer invader species
- quickly forms groves by its seeds and suckering
- good for quick growth and shade, erosion control on embankments, and reclamation of barren lands (including strip mines)
- wood is hard and rot resistant with a yellow to green interior wood; used for fence posts or any situation where rot resistance is needed

### Texture

- medium in foliage and bold when bare

### Assets

- quick growth and shade under adverse conditions
- showy fragrant inflorescences in late May
- flowering at a young age

### Liabilities

- prickly stems
- locust borer can be a problem to the wood and stem integrity
- poor autumn color
- short-lived
- does not flower yearly
- insect prone

### Habitat

- Zones 4 to 8
- Native to Eastern U.S. (Appalachian and Ozark Mountains)



## SELECTIONS

### Alternates

- trees with showy or fragrant late spring inflorescences (*Cercis canadensis*, *Cladrastis kentukea*, etc.)
- trees with very upright growth habits (*Ailanthus altissima*)
- trees with rapid growth under stressful situations, especially poor soil in exposed sites (*Ailanthus altissima*)

### Cultivars – Variants – Related species

- the straight species is grown in reclamation sites
- a few cultivars of *R. pseudoacacia* are available:
  - 'Frisia' - has yellowish leaves in early summer, extremely popular in England
  - 'Purple Robe' - has lavender flowers
  - 'Tortuosa' - has twisted branches
  - 'Umbraculifera' - has a globe shape form and is essentially thornless