Carya ovata - Shagbark Hickory (Juglandaceae)

_Carya ovata_ is a tall shade tree with straight trunk, shaggy bark (tendency of the bark to peel off in long strips), and striking golden yellow autumn color that unfortunately lasts for only a few days.

**FEATURES**

**Form**

- large deciduous tree, 60-80' tall x 25-35' wide  
- upright, straight trunk, oblong crown  
- oval outline with the lower branches somewhat drooping, the upper branches upright, and the middle branches just about horizontal  
- slow to medium growth rate (12-18" per year), long-lived

**Culture**

- full sun to partial shade  
- prefers moist, well-drained (light) soils but will tolerate many soil types  
- coarse root system makes it somewhat difficult to transplant  
- rare availability

**Foliage**

- alternate, compound, oddly pinnate, commonly 5 leaflets, 8-14" long  
- serrated margin

- lanceolate to oblanceolate leaflets  
- deep yellow green in summer, golden-yellow/brown in autumn; autumn color can be spectacular, if brief

**Flowers**

- catkins up to 6" long  
- spring

**Fruit**

- oval/round, 1-2"  
- dry, hard; edible but must be cleaned  
- very showy

**Twigs**

- gray-brown, stout, many lenticels

**Trunk**

- very distinctive and showy as the tree matures  
- shaggy, resulting from long plates which are detached from trunk at both ends but remain attached in the middle

**USAGE**

**Function**

- shade tree, specimen, highway plantings; the tree is most likely used in a naturalistic setting; it can be found in older neighborhoods

**Texture**

- medium in foliage and coarse when bare

**Assets**

- striking autumn color  
- interesting bark

**Liabilities**

- fruit can cause significant litter  
- fallen leaves can be messy because of their large size

**Habitat**

- Zones 4-8  
- Native to Eastern U.S.

**SELECTIONS**

**Alternates**

- other large shade trees (Acer saccharinum, A. saccharum, Aesculus flava, Celtis occidentalis, etc.)

**Cultivars – Variants – Related species**

- the species form is the only form available  
- not widely grown in nurseries