

Carya - Growing Guide

Growing Carya

Commonly known as 'Hickory'

Recently I was completely 'stumped' by a large vigorous and spreading tree at Ventnor Botanic Gardens. The spectacular pinnate dark green leaves suggested that the tree ought to be evergreen but I was not fooled. What was more of a puzzle was the oval green fruits appearing singly or in small clusters all over the tree. They looked like young conkers without the spikes or walnuts. Eventually I worked it out – *Carya ovata* – the 'Shagbark Hickory' from North America.



Carya ovata



Carya ovata



Carya ovata



Carya glabra

The three species of hickory we offer are also North American trees and all perfectly hardy in the UK. They are grown for their foliage, ornamental bark and superb autumn foliage colours. As such they make an excellent choice for an unusual specimen tree in a lawn or parkland setting. The *C. ovata* I observed was clearly going to produce edible fruits but so too do *C. glabra* ('Hognut') and *C. illinionensis* ('Pecan Nut'). When mature the nuts are 2½in long and thick shelled. Hognuts taste rather bitter but ripe pecan nuts do not.

These trees are 60-80ft tall in maturity with a broadly similar spread. They will grow well in full sun or partial shade in rich fertile soil. When we grow these in deep pots in the nursery they develop a sturdy tap root and are best planted out quickly.

These trees are not dioecious and produce male and female flowers on the same tree. So many more obscure trees require two trees of different sexes but not the hickories!

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