



Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) - A Tree in Trouble
aka White Walnut



Habitat: Deciduous or mixed forests, fencelines or open fields

Blooms: April - June

Status: Ontario Species at Risk, S3/END

Did you know?

Butternuts produce an edible and nutritious nut which is an important food source for birds & small mammals

Butternuts are in decline due Butternut canker – a virulent fungal disease.

Healthy Butternuts have been found along the Bruce Trail, which may support a provincial Butternut Recovery Program.

Identification

Butternut or Black Walnut?

Habitat & Range

Butternuts in Decline

What is the BTC doing for Butternuts?

Links

Identification:

Butternuts are slow growing members of the Walnut family that are native to northeastern North America. Forest stands rarely contain more than the occasional Butternut as they grow individually or in small groups. It is short-lived - 100 years is an old Butternut, compared to 200 years for Maple and Oak.



Bark:

Ash-grey with irregular, flat-topped ridges

Leaves:

Compound leaf with 11-17 leaflets oppositely arranged along a central stalk

Single leaflet at the top of the central stalk is similar in size to the rest

Leaves are alternately arranged on the twigs

Leaflets themselves are stalkless

Hairy on the underside

Leaves come out late and drop early (compared to other native tree species)



Twigs:

Can you see the monkey's face? --->

If you've got a good imagination, this can be helpful in identifying a Butternut. The leaf scar left by the falling Butternut leaves resembles a monkey's face with a hairy eyebrow at the top.

Flowers:

Buds hairy, blunt and tan coloured.

Male flowers (slender catkins) develop first

Female flowers emerge later as short spikes with a bright pink colour

Nuts:

Oval with pointed ends. Encased by a greenish husk which is sticky and covered in hairs.

Found in clusters of 2-5.

Edible & nutritious

High value to wildlife (esp. birds & small mammals)

Humans have historically used them for cooking, hair dressing, leather-making and polishing tools and ornaments.



Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY



Butternut or Black Walnut?

Butternut and its close relative, Black Walnut, are easily confused. A comparison of the two species can be [found here](#).

Habitat & Range:

Butternuts are shade intolerant which means they do not like shade but prefer full sun. Often times you will find the lower branches to die back as the tree canopy blocks the light but the upper branches will be vigorous and healthy.

Like Black walnut, they produce a substance called juglone in roots, fruit husks and leaves that is toxic to some plant species. This substance inhibits the growth of other plant species but the provincially rare Wild Ginseng often grows underneath Butternuts.

Butternut trees grow in mixed forests throughout the Deciduous and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forest regions of southern Ontario. They are also found along the St Lawrence River in Quebec and a small population exists in New Brunswick. Their range extends into eastern United States down to Alabama.

Butternuts in Decline

Butternuts are in drastic decline as a fungal disease called Butternut canker has decimated the population. It infects and kills healthy trees of all sizes and forms black sooty patches on the bark.

There is no cure for the disease and several agencies in Ontario have teamed up as part of a large recovery effort to try and save this species.

Trees are located and assessed for their resistance to the canker in the hopes of finding trees from which seeds and twig grafts can be collected to grow resistant populations.

What is the BTC doing for Butternuts?

Ecologists with the BTC have been certified as Butternut health assessors by the Ontario MNR.

Any trees that are identified in the field are investigated and any healthy trees are recorded and the data is sent to the Butternut Recovery Program (a joint program of several Ontario organizations, including the Forest Gene Conservation Association and several local Ontario Stewardship councils).

You can help by reporting your Butternut sightings along the Bruce Trail so BTC ecologists can assess their health.

Report your sightings of butternut or other interesting species to BTC ecologists >>



Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY



Links to more Butternut info:

A Landowners Resource Guide: An easy to read comprehensive guide to Butternuts

http://www.fgca.net/conservation/sar/pdf/Butternut_LO_Guide.pdf

More from the Forest Gene Conservation Association on the Butternut:

<http://fgca.net/conservation/sar/butternut.aspx>

Article: Woodlot Owners Key to Butternut Recovery

http://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/docs/woodlot_owners_key_to_butternut_recovery.pdf

(Written by one of the BTC's volunteer Land Stewards, Nancy Tilt, for the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association.)