

Robinia pseudoacacia, Black Locust

The Black Locust is native to the Southern Appalachians, the Ozarks, and other areas in the mid-south US. This species has spread to become invasive in prairies and savannas of the Midwest as well as the pine barren habitats of the northeast. Infestations can quickly dominate areas and shade out other plants. This species can fix nitrogen in the soil, thus altering the natural chemistry of the habitat. This characteristic allows it to grow in poor soils and disturbed areas.

Description: This deciduous tree can grow between 30-50 feet tall and spread out 20-35 feet wide. The bark is light brown, rough, and becomes furrowed with age. Branches have short, paired spines with pinnate dark green leaves. Each leaf has 7-21 oval leaflets. Spines are especially present on young plants.

Control: For small saplings, digging can be used to remove the entire root system. Cutting without the use of herbicides will result in vigorous sprouting. Mowing, burning, or girdling is not recommended for this reason. Herbicides seem to be the most effective method for controlling Black Locust through use of a foliar or a basal bark spray.

Look-alikes: Although similar in appearance to the Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), it lacks that tree's characteristic long branched thorns on the trunk, instead having pairs of short prickles at the base of each leaf. The leaflets are also much broader than Honey Locust and the seed pods are less twisted. It may also resemble the Japanese Pagoda Tree (*Styphnolobium japonicum*) which has smaller flower spikes and lacks spines.

Flower Time and Description: Clustered white flowers bloom in late spring from May to June, followed by smooth purple/brown seed pods.

