

Northern Catalpa

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Catalpa speciosa

Family *Bignoniaceae*

Uses

- Brought to Ohio by farmers over 200 years ago to grow for wooden fence posts and railroad ties
- Rapid growth made it desirable for construction projects that required considerable amounts of cheap timber
- Now used primarily as ornamental/shade tree in urban or suburban environments
- In southern range of this species, the larva of the obligate *Catalpa* resident, the *Catalpa* sphinx moth, are harvested and used as bait by avid anglers

Habitat

- Native to relatively small area of Mississippi River Valley Basin

- Introduced East and west of the Mississippi and Ohio River basins where it has often escaped to colonize river banks and moist areas along roads and fields

Characteristics

- Wood lightweight and resistant to rot but somewhat brittle
- At maturity the crown has been known to measure 40' across, the trunk has been known to measure 70' high and is usually 1-2' in diameter
- Prefers sunny to partial shade conditions and moist, rich, deep soils
- Also known as Hardy Catalpa, Catawba Tree, Cigar Tree and Western Catalpa
- Large, green, entire, heart-shaped leaves are

- non-lobed and pinnately veined, usually whorled in arrangement
- Blooms from May to June
- 6-23" long, thin, cylindrical fruits are green in summer, stay brown on tree through winter
- Bark highly variable but usually furrowed rather than scaly, reddish in winter
- Trunk generally short and often grows vertically crooked which makes it unsuitable for heavy logging
- Trees typically live one hundred years or more if they occupy a habitat sheltered from severe winds or ice storms
- Phase transition usually takes fifteen years or more and seeds dispersed via wind and insect pollinators

Pests & Diseases

- Relatively trouble free tree- plenty of minor pests and diseases but none pose serious threat to life of tree
- Caterpillar of *Catalpa sphinx* is most grave threat to health of tree and has been known on occasion to defoliate a tree



Impact on Animals

- Poses some problems in suburban/urban areas where it is grown as an ornamental- height combined with brittle wood makes branches susceptible to wind or ice damage, grows fast and often gives more shade than desired, drops enormous fruits and seeds from spring to fall
- White flowers favorite stop for hummingbirds, begins to flower after 7 years old

References

1. http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/Home/trees/catalpa_nth/rn/tabid/5349/Default.aspx
2. <http://www.arbor-day.org/treeguide/treeDetail.cfm?id=130>
3. http://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/atlas/tree/Rftreemod_452.html#

What pest is responsible for defoliation of the Catalpa but also for the success of some fishermen in the South?

- A. Tomato Worm
- B. Catalpa Sphinx
- C. Door to Door salesmen
- D. Gypsy Moth