



Eastern Black Walnut *Juglans nigra*

This New Jersey native tree is very easily spotted in the landscape due to its notable upright trunk and compound leaf structure with large leaflets. When crushed, the leaves have a pungent limy essence. Today, as with yesteryear's Native Americans and early settlers, black walnut is still used for: food, a black to brown semi-permanent fiber dye or ink derived from the fleshy green nut covering, medicine, fence posts, gun stocks, prime furniture and assorted housewares. There is nothing more visually stunning than a black walnut cutting board well coated with mineral spirit!

Black walnut is a canopy or upper story tree in New Jersey because it can grow to a height of about 75' and spread to about 60' wide at maturity. Given its name, this tree produces walnuts that ripen and fall in early to mid-autumn. Black walnut tree roots contain juglone, a growth-inhibiting toxic substance released when the roots of other plant species come in contact with walnut roots. The conspicuous fruit can weigh about 12 grams and consists of three layers: a fleshy green husk; a black inner shell that is hard, thick and corrugated; and the kernel or "meat", which is oily and sweet. The nuts are eaten by people, woodpeckers, foxes and squirrels. So, if you plan to grow one, avoid installing under utility lines and PLEASE park your car elsewhere.

In urban parks and open spaces, black walnut makes for one of many ideal street trees given its deep taproot for stability, dappled shade for residents to lounge under on hot summer days and a high protein food for city wildlife and people. It can live for about 200 years, providing generations of city-dwellers the comfort of a cool breeze and an ecosystem for four-legged and winged neighbors!



Ask A Naturalist

- The dye for fiber is derived from the decomposition of the fruit husk and will stain your hands for weeks when collecting them.
- Not all plants are affected by juglone. Pawpaw trees thrive under the shade of black walnuts!
- Squirrels will collect and bury the nuts for later, helping to disperse the tree community-wide.
- Black walnut logs bring premium prices, and have since the 1700s, with single trees bringing up to \$20,000 each.

