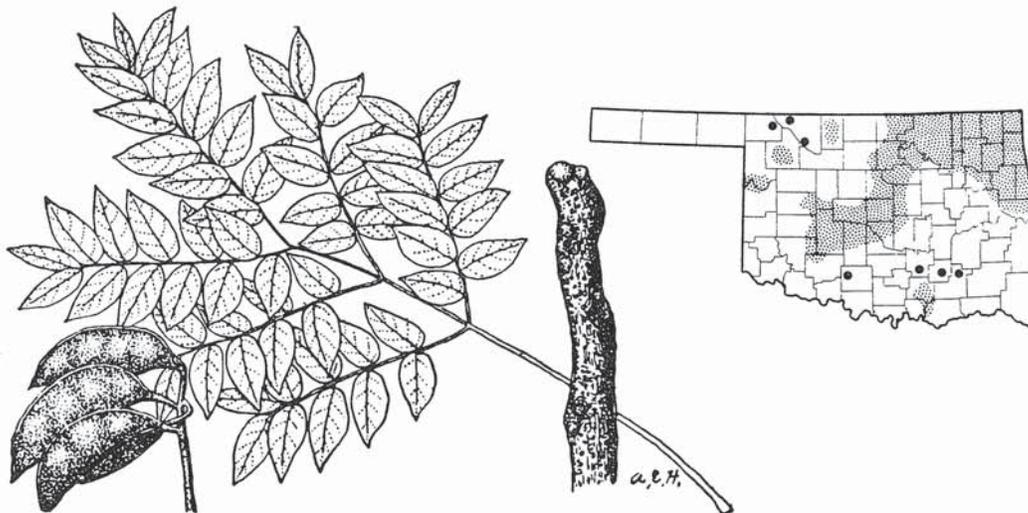


108. KENTUCKY COFFEETREE

Gymnocladus dioicus (L.) K. Koch; coffeetree.

Medium-sized to large tree 60 ft (18 m) high with short trunk 1½ ft (0.5 m) in diameter and narrow open crown of stout branches and coarse graceful foliage. Twigs few, long, very stout, dark brown, hairy when young, with large heart-shaped leaf-scars and thick pinkish brown pith. Buds 2 at node, tiny, round, brown hairy, partly hidden; no end bud.



Leaves *bipinnately compound, very large*, 12-30 in (30-76 cm) long, the axis with 3-8 pairs of side axes or forks, the upper with 6-14 mostly paired leaflets, sometimes also 1 at tip, the lowest with as few as 1. Leaflets short-stalked, *ovate*, 1-2½ in (2.5-6 cm) long, ¾-1¼ in (2-3 cm) wide, short-pointed, rounded at base, *not toothed*, becoming nearly hairless, *dull green* above, paler beneath, pink when unfolding, turning yellow in autumn.

Flowers *many* in large upright terminal clusters (racemes) on long slender stalks, ⅝-¾ in (15-19 mm) long, *greenish white* and hairy, with narrow tube and 4-5 spreading narrow petals, mostly male and female on different trees in late spring.

Fruits *few* large *dark brown pods* mostly 4-7 in (10-18 cm) long and 1½-2 in (4-5 cm) wide, *thick* and thick-walled, hanging down and *falling unopened* in winter. Seeds several in greenish sticky sweetish pulp, *rounded* but slightly flattened, ¾ in (2 cm) in diameter, *shiny dark brown*, hard and thick-walled.

Bark gray, thick, rough, deeply furrowed into narrow scaly ridges turned to side.

Wood light reddish brown with thin yellowish white sapwood, ring porous, uneven-textured, moderately heavy (sp. gr. .53), moderately hard, strong, and durable. Used locally for furniture, cabinetwork, interior finish, novelties, fenceposts, and railroad crossties.

Scattered or rare in moist soil of valleys, ne. to c. Okla., local in s.c. and nw. Okla. (except panhandle). Scattered in hardwood forests, upper Miss. and Ohio valleys in ne. and c. U.S. Zone 4.

Kentucky coffeetree and devils-walkingstick technically have the largest leaves of all Oklahoma's native trees, though bipinnately compound and composed of many small leaflets. The large seeds are poisonous raw but when roasted provided the pioneers with a coffee substitute, as the common name indicates. Sometimes carried as charms and known as luck-beans. The fruit pulp has served in home remedies. Planted for ornament for the very large leaves and stout twigs conspicuous in winter. The state tree of Kentucky.