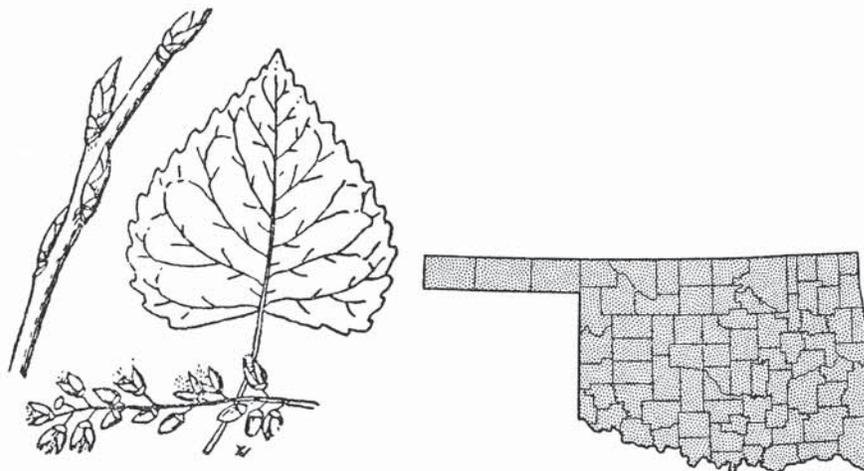


## 15. EASTERN COTTONWOOD

*Populus deltoides* Bartr. ex Marsh.; cottonwood, Carolina poplar.

Large tree 50-80 ft (15-24 m) high with stout trunk 1-4 ft (0.3-1.2 m) in diameter, often forked into large branches, and with broad irregular open crown. **Twigs** stout, often angled, green or yellow brown, hairless, with raised triangular leaf-scars. **Buds** large, long-pointed, light brown, with several shiny scales, resinous.



**Leaves** triangular, 3-7 in (7.5-18 cm) long, 3-5 in (7.5-13 cm) wide, long-pointed, nearly straight at base, with *coarse curved teeth*, hairless, slightly thickened, *shiny green*, turning yellow in autumn. Leafstalk long, slender, *flattened*.

**Flowers** many in narrow drooping catkins 2-3½ in (5-9 cm) long, male crowded with many stamens and fewer female on different trees, in early spring before leaves.

**Seed capsules** elliptical, ¾ in (10 mm) long, light brown, splitting into 3-4 parts, many on slender stalks in drooping clusters to 8 in (20 cm) long. **Seeds** abundant, tiny, in tufts of cottony white hairs, in spring.

**Bark** yellowish green and smooth, becoming light gray, very thick, rough, and deeply furrowed.

**Wood** grayish white to light brown with thick whitish sapwood, diffuse porous, moderately soft, moderately lightweight (sp. gr. .37), with odor when moist, warping upon drying. Principal uses are boxes and crates, especially food containers, furniture, plywood, woodenware, matches, excelsior, pulpwood including magazine paper, and fuel.

Common and often dominant in pure stands and with willows, flood plain and valley forests, wet soil bordering streams and lakes, widespread in every co. nearly throughout Okla. A pioneer tree on sand bars and flood plains. E. half of U.S. and adjacent Canada. Zone 2.

Two intergrading varieties are distinguished. Eastern cottonwood (typical) is in e. Okla. Plains cottonwood (var. *occidentalis* Rydb.; *P. sargentii* Dode), in c. and w. Okla. has slightly smaller leaves often broader than long, with edges more coarsely toothed.

Cottonwood is one of the fastest growing native trees but is short-lived. It is easily propagated by cuttings and is widely planted to produce shade and shelterbelts quickly. However, the soft wood is often broken by winds, the roots often stop drains and crack sidewalks, the leaves begin to shed in midsummer, and the cotton from female trees is often a nuisance. Nevertheless, cottonwood for its abundance is honored as the state tree of Nebraska, Kansas, and Wyoming.

In Oklahoma the largest trees in trunk diameter are cottonwoods, many reaching 4-5 ft (1.2-1.5 m) or more. The state champion near Woodward measures about 9 ft (2.7 m) and is surpassed only by the largest baldcypress.