

Black Gum
Nyssa sylvatica



Description: medium sized tree to 90 feet tall, 2 to 3 feet diameter with spreading crowns. Branch is nearly at right angles to trunk in younger trees. Bark is alligator like blocks on older trees. Trunk bases of older trees are often swollen. Easily confused with persimmon due two similarities and leaves and bark

Leaves: Alternate, simple, born singly on short less than 1 in stems, but clustered near twig ends. Blades egg-shaped, whitest above middle to 6 in long half as wide edges smooth, short pointed at tip, tapering at base shiny dark-green above, paler and somewhat hairy below. Turn beautiful deep red to purple in fall

Bark: bark to dark brown to grey black deeply fissured on older trees and breaks into blocks that resemble alligator hide

Flowers: unisexual flowers usually on separate trees from May through June. Male flowers small, greenish, in clusters. Female, two to several on long stalks near leaf stems

Fruits: fleshy, plum like to 1in, oval, blue-black, sour, on 1 to 3 inch stems ripen October. The single seed has pointed ends and several ridges. Scattered by birds and small mammals

Habitat/Range: Flatwoods and upland ridges, usually on acid soils. Occasionally in fence rows and old pastures. Beautiful ornamental and widely planted. Common in the southern half of Indiana and in Northern third, rare to absent on Central till plain