

Native Black Poplar

Identification

Yes - Black Poplar!

General appearance:

- ü Leaning trunk, untidy appearance.
- ü Lower branches arching down, upper branches and twigs often sweeping upwards.
- ü Bark dark grey/brown, with lots of burrs, fissures and knobbly bits.

Twigs:

- ü Twigs round in cross-section, tapering.
- ü Buds brown, shiny, tending to point outwards.
- ü Twigs often have a sticky yellow exudate around the terminal bud.
- ü Young twigs and leaf stalks have short fine hairs, the hairs are lost by July.

Leaves:

- ü Leaf shape very variable - usually deltoid to ovate, with flattened leaf stalk.
- ü Leaf margins serrated or toothed, with *very* few hairs.
- ü Young leaves green or tinged *slightly* reddish.
- ü No leaf glands present at junction of leaf and stalk (though these can appear in late summer).
- ü Spiral galls may be present on leaf stalk.

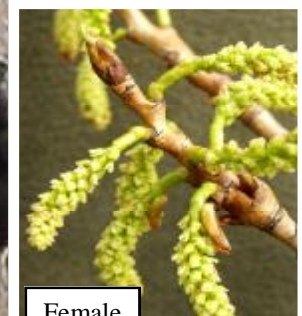
Flowers:

- ü Flowers are produced in May.
- ü Male trees have red catkins and female trees have yellow/green ones.
- ü Female trees produce lots of fluffy seed in June.

No - not Black Poplar!

- û Young leaves red.
- û Leaf margins hairy or with hooked teeth.
- û Glands at junction of leaf and stalk - knobbly to touch.
- û Twigs square in cross section.
- û Mistletoe - not found on native Black Poplar.

Note: Poplars hybridise easily, many 'blacks' turn out to be hybrids.



Native Black Poplar Information

A thousand years ago the native Black Poplar thrived across the lowland floodplains of England. Its huge, often steeply-leaning bulk, though never common, was a striking feature of the landscape.

All the pictures on this page are Cheshire Black Poplars



Populus nigra ssp betulifolia occurs in Britain, northern France and western Germany, restricted largely to lowland river floodplains. In Britain, since the early 19th century, housing and farming have steadily destroyed its natural habitat, and this great tree has quietly vanished from our countryside. In 1993 environmental scientists predicted that the species would be extinct in the UK within twenty years.

The current UK population is around 7,000 strong, 95% elderly, largely genetically identical, and more than 90% are male. The few female trees are often too far from a male, or from any suitable habitat, for natural reproduction to occur.

Cheshire has about 250 trees, which are particularly important as the proportion of females is high, and preliminary genetic studies indicate that a large number of different clones are present in the county.



The native Black Poplar is now Britain's rarest native timber tree and is identified as a local priority species throughout its range. Across the UK Local Biodiversity Action Plans are



involving local organisations and volunteers in efforts to conserve the tree, and to re-establish it in suitable habitat. We are striving to save what has become known as 'The Forgotten Tree'.

For more information: UK: Dr. Fiona Cooper BSBI National Recorder (email: fiona.cooper4@btopenworld.com)

Cheshire: Sarah Bird, Chester Zoo (email: s.bird@chesterzoo.org) Tel: 01244 389448