



COTTONWOOD

Populus deltoides

Native Range

Cottonwood, the official Kansas state tree, occurs throughout Kansas.

Mature Size

Cottonwood grows to 70 to 100 feet in height and spreads 50 to 70 feet.

Growth Rate

Cottonwood is a fast growing tree when it has adequate moisture and often grows as much as 8 feet per year.

Leaves, Stems and Fruit

The leaves are simple and alternately arranged on the stem. Leaves are triangular with pointed tips and broad base and they are 2 ½ to 5 inches long and nearly as wide. Flowers appear before the leaves in April. Male and female catkins are on separate trees. The fruit mature and the "cotton" produced by the female trees is released in May or early June. Bark of young trees is yellow-green and smooth. Older bark is ashy-gray, deeply furrowed, with wide, flat topped ridges.

Uses

Timber

Cottonwood may be used in pulp, and its lumber is used in pallets and low grade construction.

Fuelwood

Cottonwood's fast growth offers potential for fuelwood production. It is easily processed into fuelwood, but it burns fast and has low heat production.

Wildlife

Cottonwood provides cover for several kinds of wildlife such as turkey and deer. Both whitetail and mule deer browse on twigs and foliage.

Windbreaks

Cottonwood may be used in windbreaks. Because of its large size and rapid growth, it should not be planted closer than 25 feet from slower growing plants

Adaptation

Statewide.

Soils

Cottonwood grows best on moist, loamy soils but it will grow on most soils if adequate moisture is available. Moisture is a limiting factor on most upland soils.

Spacing

Normally spacing is 8 to 18 feet within the row and 20 to 24 feet between rows in multiple row plantings.

Culture

One year old, bare-root seedlings, 18 to 24 inches tall are used in plantings. The seedlings are easy to establish if adequate water is available. They respond well to good weed and grass control, especially during the first 3 years. They can not tolerate shade.

Pests

Cottonwood is plagued by several insect and disease pests which are especially injurious on low vigor trees. Maintain vigor by assuring adequate soil moisture.