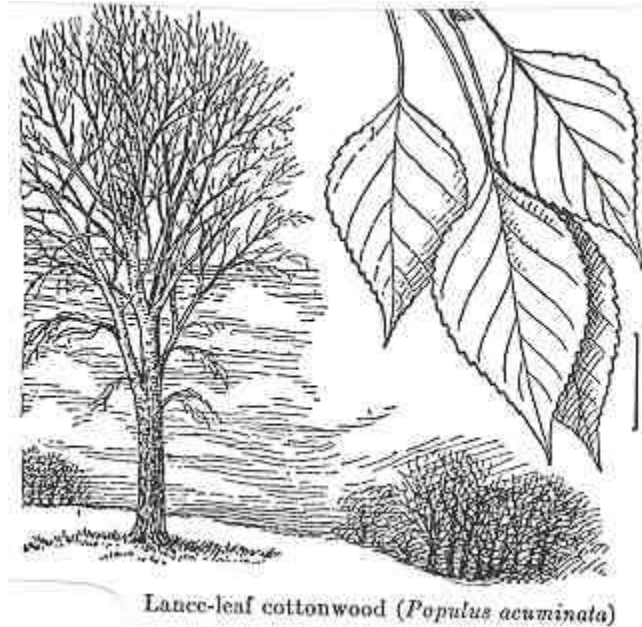


Lanceleaf Cottonwood

Lanceleaf Cottonwood



Our course lay along the bank of Ham's Fork, through a hilly and stony, but not a rocky country; the willow flourished on the margin of the stream, and occasionally the eye was relieved, on scanning the plain, by a pretty clump of cottonwood or poplar trees. - John Kirk Townsend, Narrative of a Journey across the Rocky Mountains, 1834.

The Lanceleaf cottonwood is found along streams in and near the foothills, and is easily recognized by the long leaf stalk and the distinctive leaf shape, tapering to a point, with maximum width about mid-length not near the base of the leaf. It is found from 4500 to about 8500 feet (1200 to 2600 m) elevation. It grows to 60 feet (20 m) high and 18 inches in trunk diameter. Limbs tend to be more slender and upright than on Plains cottonwood, but similar to the Narrowleaf cottonwood limbs. The scientific name is “*Populus acuminata* Rydberg,” *acuminata* meaning tapering to a point, referring to the leaf shape.

Lanceleaf reproduces from root suckers, and by layering (rooting) of branches buried in wet soil, for example, following a flood. Whether it makes fertile seeds is not known to me.

This tree variety may be a hybrid of the Narrowleaf cottonwood and the Plains or Rio Grande cottonwoods. Plains, Narrowleaf, and Lanceleaf, may be found together along the eastern foothills near elevation 5500 feet (1700 m); for example, in the Garden of the Gods near Colorado Springs.

Lanceleaf Cottonwood

Identification

Leaves

Leaf stalks are slender and long - at least 0.5 to 0.75 the length of the blade. Note that the Narrowleaf cottonwood (which has somewhat similar leaf blade shape) has short stalks.

The leaf blade is 2 to 3.5 inches (2.5 to 9 cm) long; width is more than half the length, but not as wide as plains cottonwood leaves. Leaf shape is highly variable, even on one stem. Leaf stalks are round and not flattened. Blades are thick, glossy, and leathery, like all cottonwood leaves.

Leaf shape is intermediate between Narrowleaf and Plains cottonwood leaf shape, and the leaf with its long stalk is the most distinctive characteristic of this tree.

Bark

The bark is smoother and paler than the bark on limbs of the same size on the Plains cottonwood, often only slightly broken and pale yellowish or whitish green even on large trunks and limbs. The bark furrowing never achieves the deep, dark gray, furrows of Plains cottonwood bark. However bark is not a good way to separate the cottonwoods.

Buds are not aromatic and not sticky.

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