

# Eastern Cottonwood

## Botanical (Latin) Name -Populus Deltoides



- ❖ Eastern Cottonwood also called Necklace Poplar is a deciduous tree that typically grows 50-80' tall (less frequently to 120') with a broad, open-rounded shaped crown and has a massive trunk. It is one of the largest and fastest growing North American hardwood trees. They typically live 70 to 100 years, but they have the potential to live 200 to 400 years if they have a good growing environment.
- ❖ It is native from eastern North America through the Great Plains, typically growing along streams and rivers and in lowland areas and swamps.
- ❖ Tiny male and female flowers appear in separate catkins on separate male and female trees making this a dioecious tree.
- ❖ Flowers bloom in early spring before the foliage emerges. Male flowers are reddish but not showy. Female flowers split open and give way to abundant fluffy white seeds during the early summer. These seeds with silky white hairs give the appearance of cotton as they blow through the air and along the ground, typically coating nearby water and collecting along gutters, curbs, roadsides and fences and give the tree its name. The seeds are only a couple millimeters long, which is quite remarkable considering that they can grow into one of the largest trees in North America. Although the female trees are messy it is undeniable that the seeds are pretty as they parachute down in the wind.
- ❖ Bark on mature trees is ridged and dark gray but is a smooth gray to yellow-green when young.
- ❖ The leaves are glossy dark green, triangular, coarsely toothed, and 3"-6" long that turn yellow in fall.
- ❖ The wood is weak and has little commercial value (warps easily) other than for crates, plywood and pulp.
- ❖ It is the state tree of Kansas, Nebraska and Wyoming.
- ❖ Eastern Cottonwoods are important habitat to many animals. The fluff makes a good nest lining and the tree itself provides potential nesting habitat for many birds. Some birds also eat the buds and catkins on the tree during the spring as well as feast on all the insects that feed on the tree. Some caterpillars use Eastern Cottonwood as a food source to develop into butterflies and moths. White-Tailed Deer browse on twigs and foliage as does the Cottontail Rabbit when seedlings are within reach. Beavers use small trees as a source of food and as construction material for their dens and dams.
- ❖ Locally the Eastern Cottonwood in Pittsfield's newly named Durant Park (Pitt Park) is the Massachusetts Grand Champion for the species and the second largest tree in the commonwealth. It was 25' in circumference and 86' tall as measured in 2012/13 so it is even larger now. It is at least 300 years old and was here before the city was founded. You can visit this spectacular and special tree.

*This Tree of the Month series is brought to you by the City of Pittsfield, RSVP and Pittsfield Tree Watch, a volunteer group that promotes tree stewardship and education in our City.*

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