

DEDHAM'S LEAST WANTED!

Black Locust, *Robinia pseudoacacia*



Origin: Black locust is native to the Appalachian Mountains from central Pennsylvania to northern Alabama and Georgia. It is also native to the Ozark Mountains of southern Missouri, north and west central Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma. It has been planted and naturalized as far north as Nova Scotia and in all the contiguous United States. It has become extensively naturalized in Europe as well as other areas where it has been introduced into cultivation. Even though black locust is native in the United States, it is not native to New England. It made its way to New England by being planted for utilitarian purposes, such as erosion control, and for its wood, which is considered to be one of the most durable in North America. The wood can be used for items such as fence posts and ladder rungs.

Identification/Habitat: Black Locust is a fast-growing tree that can reach up to 100 feet in height. The roots have nitrogen-fixing nodules. The bark of the tree is gray to dark brown in color and is deeply furrowed. The

white flowers with yellow centers are in dense racemes that can be 7-10 inches long. The twigs of the tree have paired stipules that are modified into spines up 1/2 inches long at each leaf. The bluish-green leaves are alternate and odd-pinnately compound, with leaflets occurring in pairs except for the terminal leaflet. It is found in abandoned fields, edges, open disturbed areas, pastures, railroad right-of-ways, roadsides, utility right-of-ways, and vacant lots or yards. Since black locust does not tolerate low light situations, so is usually found in disturbed areas where it can get full sun. It prefers sandy, well-drained soils, and does not grow well in poorly-drained situations.

Dispersal: This tree mostly spreads by vegetative root suckers, though it can also spread via mechanical dispersal of its seeds.

Problems: Due to the fact black locust rapidly spreads via root suckers, it crowds out native vegetation. Damage to this plant only causes more root suckers and stump spouts to form. The seedlings also show this ability for rapid growth, however there is not a large amount of germination due to the inhibiting seed coat. It has been reported to grow up to 2 feet per year. Thus, it can form tall, dense, monotypic stands. It is also a great producer of nectar, which may allow it to compete with other species for pollinators.



Control: Young seedlings, with stem 2 inches or less in diameter, can be dug up and removed as long as care is taken to remove the entire root system as the plant can regrow from just a root fragment.

Any removal within 100 feet of wetland resource areas, including certified vernal pools, or within 200 feet of a perennial stream may require approval from the Dedham Conservation Commission. Please contact the Conservation Department *before* you begin!