



Dallas Park & Recreation
Bringing Communities Together

Tree Identification

Southern Catalpa

Frangula caroliniana

Secondary Names:

Indian-cherry, yellow buckthorn

Leaf Type: Deciduous

Texas Native: ✓

Firewise: ✓



Tree Description: A medium-sized tree to 50 feet in height and 1 to 2 feet in diameter, with a dense, oval crown. It is widely planted as a fast-growing yard tree in the eastern third of Texas.

Range/Site Description: Prefers rich, moist soil, but tolerates much poorer, drier sites; has naturalized somewhat along streamsides in East Texas.

Leaf: The simple, heart-shaped leaves are opposite or whorled, 8" to 12" long, short-pointed and softly pubescent beneath. They begin to drop early during dry weather in late summer.

Flower: Flowers appear in April or May as upright clusters 8" long, above the foliage, made up of several trumpet-shaped flowers 1" to 2" long, white with purplish markings.

Fruit: The bean-like capsules are 12" to 16" long and 0.5" in diameter, hanging on the tree over winter and eventually splitting lengthwise into two parts, or valves, exposing the papery seeds about 1" long.

Bark: Brown to gray, thin, breaking into long scales to give a rough appearance on older trunks.

Wood: Soft, light, coarse-grained, and durable in contact with the soil. Used for fenceposts, poles and fuel, and occasionally for railroad ties, interior finish, or cabinets.

Similar Species: Northern catalpa (*Catalpa speciosa*) may be native to southeast Texas and has leaves with long, pointed tips; princess tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*) has blue or purple flowers and a hazelnut-shaped capsule.

Interesting Facts: The long pods give catalpa the colloquial name, "Indian-cigar," and it is planted in many rural areas to generate a prized fishing bait, the "catawba worm."

Southern Catalpa: [Texas A&M Forest Service - Trees of Texas - List of Trees](#)