

# Butternut

*Juglans cinerea*

White Walnut, Oilnut

Small to medium sized native deciduous nut tree with stiff upright branches and a wide spreading crown. Uncommon throughout its range. Most frequently found in mixed rich woods, stream benches, and slopes with good drainage. Young trees tolerate considerable competition, but are shade intolerant and mature trees must reach the overstory. Flowers in April through June. Seed production rarely begins prior to 20 years with good crops every two to three years. Butternut canker, a fungal disease spread by rain, is estimated to have killed 77% of trees in native range. Relatively short-lived, seldomly reaching more than 75 years. Nuts are prized wildlife food. Occurs farther north and less south than Black Walnut. Several beautiful specimens graced the Keizer farm in Byron Center, MI. Butternut is a secondary nut and timber tree of Orion Farms.



## Identification

### Leaves

Pinnately compound 12-25 inches long, 11-17 ovate leaflets 2-6 inches each. Leaflets are sticky-oily to the touch.



### Flower/Fruit

Monoecious, asymmetrical maturation. Fruit is an oblong nut in clusters of 2-3. Thick, hard shell surrounded by sticky husk.



### Bark/Wood

Scaly, furrowed. Gray coloration. Wood is light colored. Branch pith is chambered and colored.



### Form

Wide spreading crown, medium sized tree. Trunk often forks. Scaffold branches are rather upright. Strong taproot.



### Uses

Butternut is called "white walnut" due to its light colored wood which has a natural luster that becomes satin-like when polished. The wood is moderately hard and carves easily. Uses include furniture, cabinetry, and church decorations and altars.

### Ethnobotany

Butternuts were often planted close to the house on farmsteads for food. They are popular in New England for making maple-nut candies. Early settlers used the fruit husks to make orange or yellow dyes and the root bark provided a laxative.

### Native Distribution

A species of northeastern and north-central US and southern Canada. Uncommon in its range.

### Establishment

Slow growing and requires consistent moisture during establishment.

## Growing Conditions and Culture

Mature Size 70'H x 50'W x 8'dbh  
 USDA Zone 3-7  
 Light Requirements Full Sun

Soils Well drained  
 Drought Tolerant? No  
 Inundation Tolerant? No

### Pests/Damaging Agents

Butternut canker is killing the species throughout its range. Affected portions should be cut out and burned. Paint wound with antifungal. Black Walnut unaffected.

### Similar Species

Black Walnut  
 Butternut bark is gray vs brown. Butternut has fewer leaflets and hairy leaf scar. Butternuts are much more oblong with pointed ends vs spherical black walnut.

### Propagation

Seed - cold stratify for 90-120 days.

### Source(s)

Keizer farm, Byron Center, MI; Ter Haar farm, Forest Grove, MI; Germplasm Center, Corvallis, OR.