

## Black locust

### *Robinia pseudoacacia*

#### Description

The nitrogen fixing capacity of this species may alter soil chemistry and subsequent nutrient cycling of forest systems.

#### Habit

Deciduous medium tree ranging in height from 12-25 m (40-82 ft) and 30-60 cm (12-24 in) in diameter; crown narrow, open, irregular with contorted branches.

#### Leaves

Alternate, pinnately compound with 7-21 leaflets per leaf, leaf 20-35 cm (8-14 in) long, ovate leaflets 2-5 cm (1-2 in) long and about half as wide, thin with smooth margins, hairless, dull bluish green above paler beneath, turning yellowish brown in fall.

#### Stems

Twigs puberulent, becoming smooth, green to reddish brown, with zigzag shape and two spines at each node; bark is thick, tan to gray-brown,





deeply furrowed; inner bark orange.

### **Flowers**

White in color, 5 petals, pea-like, very fragrant, raceme of 10-25 on a thin dangling pedicel; blooms May through June.

### **Fruits and Seeds**

Seed pod, form in the fall but persist over winter, smooth, dark-brown in color, flat, contains 4-8 seeds.

### **Habitat**

Very shade intolerant; can grow in many soil types except those with a high water table; formerly widely planted in Michigan and now found colonizing old fields, prairies, disturbed forests and woodlands.

### **Reproduction**

By seed. Also sprouts easily from roots and forms natural clones.

### **Similar**

Native honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) has smaller, southern native bristly locust (*Robinia hispida*) is shrublike with brushlike hairs on stems and fruit; False indigo (*Amorpha fruticosa*) shrublike with smaller leaves.

### **Monitoring and Rapid Response**

Monitor prairies and woodland edges and paths, particularly on well-drained soils; most visible in May and June while in flower but bark is distinctive year-round. Because this species is strongly clonal, all stems in a clone must be treated. Cutting and girdling stimulate sprouting unless cut stumps are treated with herbicide. Basal bark treatment is also effective. Fire stimulates resprouting; mowing stimulates germination of the (black locust) seed bank. This species is difficult to control, research



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control options thoroughly.

### **Credits**

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