

tulip tree *Liriodendron tulipifera*

Kingdom: Plantae

Division: Magnoliophyta

Class: Magnoliopsida

Order: Magnoliales

Family: Magnoliaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

Tulip tree, yellow poplar and tulip poplar are all common names for this deciduous tree that is actually not a poplar at all but a member of the magnolia family. It is the tallest-growing tree species in the eastern half of the United States. Its trunk may grow to a diameter of four feet. The crown appears oblong, arising from a long, straight trunk. The bark is gray with furrows that deepen as it ages. The large buds, (up to one inch), are flattened. Leaves are simple and arranged alternately along the stem. Each leaf has four points and a notch at its tip. A leaf measures from four to six inches in both width and length. The flowers are about two inches long with six yellow-green petals that are orange at the base surrounding a cone-shaped structure. Each flower is shaped like a tulip, the characteristic that gave rise to this tree's common name. The fruit is a dry, winged seed, about two and one-half inches long. Fruits are arranged in clusters. The pith in twigs is chambered (has partitions).

BEHAVIORS

The tulip tree may be found in the southern two-thirds of Illinois. It grows in the rich soil of upland deciduous forests. Flowers appear in April and May after the leaves have developed. This tree's wood is used for lumber, to build canoes, for frames, for making furniture, for pulp, to make boxes and more. Its seeds are important wildlife food.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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