

# Blackgum

## *Nyssa sylvatica*



### Tree Description:

A large forest tree reaching a height of over 100 feet and a trunk that exceeds 3 feet in diameter, with a straight trunk and many horizontal branches of a similar size that form a narrow, oval crown.

### Range/Site Description:

Occurs in East Texas, usually in moist, well-drained soils, but also on dry slopes with a variety of oaks.

### Leaf:

Simple, alternate, 2" to 6" long and 1" to 3" wide, oval to elliptical or even oblong, leaf edge without teeth; leaves are shiny, dark green on top, turning brilliant red, orange, and purple in the fall.

### Flower:

Male and female flowers borne on separate trees or the same tree as long, slender clusters when the leaves are about one-third grown; the male in many-flowered heads, and the female in two or several-flowered clusters.

### Fruit:

A dark blue drupe, 0.5" long, oval, containing a single hard-shelled stone, borne 2 to 3 in a cluster on a stalk 1" to 2.5" long.

### Bark:

Smooth and gray on younger trees, developing furrows and flat ridges as the tree ages, with older bark light gray and broken into thick, distinctly squarish blocks.

### Wood:

Very tough, cross-grained, not durable in contact with the soil, hard to work, and warps easily; used for crossties, basket veneer, box boards, and paper pulp.

### Similar Species:

Both water tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*) and swamp tupelo (*N. biflora*) occur in areas of standing water in East Texas and have buttressed trunks. Two-wing silverbell (*Halesia diptera*) is an understory tree with showy white flowers in spring.

### Interesting Facts:

In the old days, the hollow trunks were cut in sections and used to make bee hives; the flowers produce an excellent "tupelo honey."

# CITY OF TYLER ARBOR DAY

**Sat. January 21, 2023**

**Fun Forest Park  
900 N. Glenwood  
10:00 a.m.**

<https://bit.ly/TylerArborDay23>

