

Sassafras albidum

Sassafras

Height: 30' to 60'

Spread: 25' to 40'

Sun: Part shade to full sun

Soil Moisture: Mesic to Mesic-Dry

Soil Types: Loam, but will grow in clay and sand also

Bloom Time: April to May, just as leaves emerge

Bloom Description: Yellow, showy, fragrant. Dioecious, meaning a tree will either have all male or all female flowers.

Leaf: Unlobed (socks), two-lobed (mittens) and three-lobed (gloves) leaves are all on the same tree. Prized for fall colors of yellow, purple and red. Richer colors if grown in full sun.

Fruit: If female tree is fertilized, showy blue-black fruit (drupes)

Uses: Can be grown as lawn specimen if root suckering controlled or let it colonize in a naturalized setting.

Wildlife: Bobwhite, Wild Turkey, and many songbirds eat the fruits

Nectar: Bees

Larval Host: Spicebush swallowtail, tiger swallowtail and several moths

Pollinators: Small bees, flies and insects

Deer Resistant: No

Comments: All parts are aromatic. Fast growing and long-lasting.

Sassafras contains safrole, which the FDA labeled as a carcinogen. Sassafras oil is now sold with the safrole removed. File powder for gumbo and thickenings is made from ground up leaves of sassafras. Go ahead and chew on a twig as it does not have enough oil to do any harm. May develop into a dramatic multiple trunk specimen due to root sprouts. Prune while young to form a single trunk, if desired, and this form is usually maintained without additional pruning.

