



Nyssa sylvatica

blackgum

Family *Cornaceae*

Origin Native

WIS Code FAC CoC 6



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DESCRIPTION

Tree (to 30 m tall) with light gray bark when young and thick blocky alligator-hide like brown or black bark when mature. Branches and twigs are typically at right angles to the trunk with diaphragmed pith (inner tissue with horizontal layers). Leaves (3 to 15 cm long) are alternate, simple, oval to elliptic and margins are wavy but not toothed. Upper leaf surface is dark green, shiny, smooth and lower surface is lighter green and slightly hairy. The leaves turn a bright red, orange, purple, or yellow in the autumn.

FLOWERS AND FRUITS

April to May; August to October. Flowers appear with the leaves and are in small, green, loose drooping clusters on slender stalks with male and female flowers on separate trees. Fruits are fleshy blue-black berry-like drupes.

HABITAT

Moist to dry upland forests, seepage swamps, floodplain forests, and depression ponds.

SIMILAR SPECIES

Oxydendrum arboreum, sourwood, also has black thick blocky bark but the leaves are longer and lance-shaped with finely toothed margins (not oval with wavy margins and no teeth), the flowers are showy white, many-clustered in long drooping branched spikes and fruits are woody capsules (not drupes). *Diospyros virginiana*, persimmon, another small tree with similar bark, has solitary urn-shaped female flowers and distinctive large and fleshy orange plum-like fruits.



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Nyssa sylvatica



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Oxydendrum arboreum



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Diospyros virginiana