

American Hornbeam

Carpinus caroliniana

Height: 20-35' | Spread: 20-35' | Light: ☉-● | Moisture: well-drained moist

American hornbeam is a slow-growing, medium-sized tree with distinctive muscle-like bark and attractive red-orange fall foliage. It is naturally found as an understory species growing near the forest floor and therefore prefers some shade. It grows well along stream banks and bottomlands and tolerates periodic flooding, though it shows remarkable adaptability to drier, sunnier sites. Other common names include blue beech, water beech, musclewood and ironwood. As the common name suggests, the extremely hard wood of this tree was once used by early Americans to make bowls, tool handles and ox yokes. American hornbeam is the larval host for several native butterflies including the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail.



Photos (Clockwise from top left): [Sherief Saleh](#); [treegrow](#); Rob Routledge, Sault College, Bugwood.org; Chris Evans, University of Illinois, Bugwood.org;