

Butternut - *Juglans cinerea*



Deciduous. Height 40 feet to 80 feet. Trunk diameter 2 feet to 3 feet'. Although generally smaller than its relative, the black walnut, the butternut may grow as tall as 100 feet with a trunk diameter of 5 feet. Distribution: from Maine south to Virginia and west to Iowa and Missouri. Not a common tree in any area, it grows well in the rich moist soil of stream banks and on low rocky hills. It doesn't grow in

the coastal regions at all. The majority of butternut harvested for timber is found in the North Central States. It is an all American "heartland" species.

Butternut is naturally compared to its more valuable relative the American black walnut. It is often referred to as "white walnut" because its wood is light in color. It has a warm buttery tan color that is very appealing. Its most distinctive feature is its wonderful natural luster that becomes even more satin-like when polished. Also it has an exciting leafy grain with many variations running from plain and straight through highly figured patterns-curly, swirly, burly and character marked. It darkens to a rich hue with exposure to air and age. It is only a moderately hard wood and not overly strong but is very stable and does not warp. Also, it is very resistant to insects and decay.

Besides its inherent beauty of color and sheen butternut is very easy and rewarding to work with hand tools. It saws beautifully and carves like butter. It glues exceptionally well and finishes to a deep rich satin luster, like no other wood. Specialty wood workers are very familiar with these qualities. Attractive for its looks, butternut is in the upper medium price range. It has limited availability as veneer and lumber. Growing as a single tree scattered throughout the hardwood forests it is a by-product of other hardwood timber operations. Not much is cut annually so it is stocked only in specialty lumber yards. This relative rareness is what makes it so attractive and appealing to fine furniture makers and architects. Butternut is used mainly for its decorative properties-its golden color and matchless luster. In years past it was used for intricately hand-carved wall-panels, furniture and cabinetry. It was the first choice for church decoration and altars. Today it is used for fine interior architectural installations-woodwork, paneling and trim. It is also used for instrument cases.