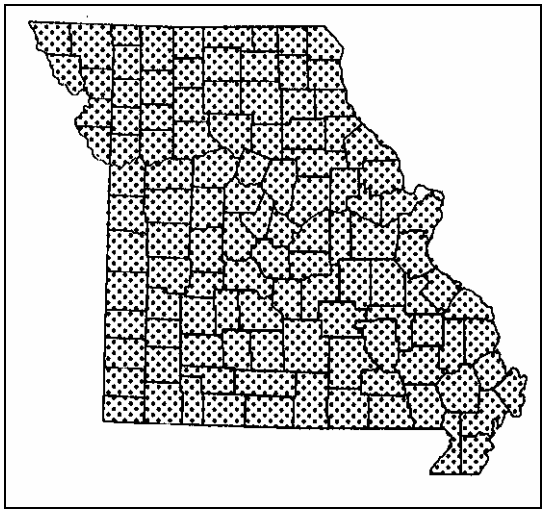
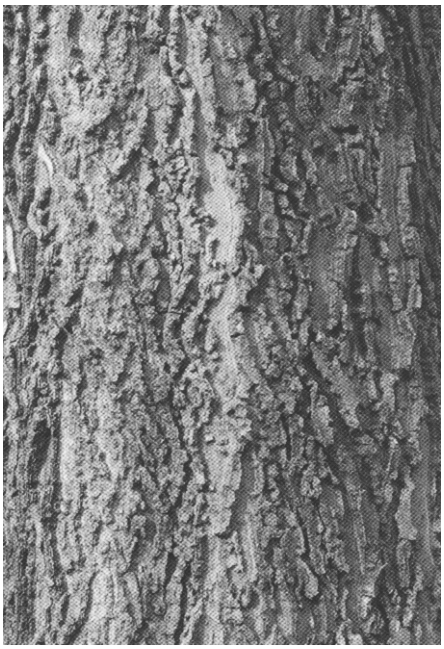
Hackberry

Celtis spp.

Common hackberry (*C. occidentalis* L.) is one of our most beautiful and neglected hardwoods. Sugarberry (*C. laevigata* L.), a closely related species, also furnishes much of the hackberry lumber in commercial trade. Both species are closely related to the elms. Hackberry grows to a large size and is generally found in river bottoms, along streams, on deep soils; it is associated with American elm, boxelder, soft maples, cottonwood and sycamore.

The wood is often creamy white with no clear difference between the sapwood and heartwood. It may also be light yellow in color and there may be gray to gray-brown streaks and patches in the heartwood. The bark is grayish to light brown with corky warts or ridges becoming scaly. The grain of the wood closely resembles that of the ash family. The wood is ring porous with clearly visibly annual rings. It is of medium density, hardness and strength, without any characteristic odor or taste. The wood has good bending strength, is average in machining, shrinks moderately and glues very well. It is unusually susceptible to sap stain and must be handled according to best drying practices to prevent this. It is capable of staining and finishing extremely well. The wood is not durable when exposed to conditions favoring decay.

The woods of both species are mixed in the trade and are sought for furniture frames and for boxes and crates. A flexible wood, it was once used for barrel hoops. It makes fine trim, woodenware and wall paneling and is an excellent wood for woodworkers.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