

Carpinus caroliniana *ssp. virginiana*



American hornbeam, musclewood

Family	<i>Betulaceae</i>	
Origin	Native	
WIS Code	FAC	CoC 5

DESCRIPTION

Small tree (to 10 m tall) with light gray, smooth bark, and irregular fluted muscle-like trunks. Twigs are hairy and reddish brown. Leaves (5 to 12 cm long) are simple, alternate, elliptic tapering to a pointed tip with sharp double-toothed leaf margins.

FLOWERS AND FRUITS

April-May; September to October. Separate male and female flower clusters are in drooping spikes (catkins) on the same tree, developing as the leaves emerge. The fruits are nutlets, held in hanging elongated clusters (2 to 5 cm long), and each nutlet has a three-lobed large leafy bract with smooth or toothed margins.

HABITAT

Mesic forests, floodplain forests, swamps, and stream banks.

SIMILAR SPECIES

Ostrya virginiana, eastern hop-hornbeam, has reddish-brown flaking bark and the fruits are held in a similar hanging cluster, however the nutlets are inside inflated sacs (not attached to flattened bracts). *Corylus americana*, American hazelnut, also has toothed leaf margins, but the leaf bases are distinctly heart-shaped. The large nuts also have bracts, but are in rounded clusters (not hanging elongated clusters).



© Arthur Haines



© Donald Cameron



Carpinus caroliniana

© Matthew Heron



Ostrya virginiana

© Frank Bramley



Corylus americana

© Peggy O.