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Common cottonwood

Populus deltoides Marshall

Life cycle

Fast-growing, weedy tree.

Leaves

Alternate, simple, broadly triangular, 3 to 5 inches long with coarse, incurved-toothed margins and a smooth base. Leaves are shiny green above and have two to five prominent, fingerlike glands where the long, flattened petiole attaches to the leaf. Margins are outlined by a colorless border.

Stems

Up to 100 feet at maturity with a straight trunk and minimal branching. Bark is ash gray on mature trees and greenish yellow on young stems. Plants have the ability to form many vigorous, weedy sprouts.

Flowers and fruit

Male and female flowers are found on separate plants and are clustered in drooping, up to 4-inch-long spikes. Male flowers are reddish;



Common cottonwood seedling.



Common cottonwood leaf.

Salicaceae (Willow family)

Common cottonwood *continued*

female flowers are greenish. Fruit are three- to four-valved capsules that release cottony, wind-disseminated seeds.

Reproduction

Seeds.



Glands on upper leaf surface of common cottonwood.



Mass of common cottonwood seeds.



Common cottonwood tree.

Salicaceae (Willow family)