



BLACK TUPELO *Nyssa sylvatica* Marsh.



While black tupelo wood is heavy, fine-grained and very tough, it is not durable and is used principally for pulp.

Black tupelo, or blackgum, is found in Sagadahoc, Androscoggin, Cumberland and York counties and as far north as Southern Oxford County and Waterville in Kennebec County. However, it is not commonly found except in very wet areas. Trees 2 feet in diameter are found in the town of Casco on an island in Sebago Lake. Large specimens have also been reported on the south side of Pleasant Mountain in Denmark on a flat, open, wet area. Easily distinguished at a distance by its numerous slender horizontal branches, the tree rarely reaches more than 50 feet in height. It occurs in rich moist soils, such as swamps or borders of rivers. Black tupelo can live to a very old age. Trees over 500 years old have been found in New Hampshire.

The **bark** on young trees is smooth, grayish and flaky, later becoming reddish to grayish-brown. On old trees, it forms coarse blocks or ridges.





The **leaves** are alternate, oval to obovate, 2–5 inches long, wedge-shaped at the base and pointed at the tip. The edges are usually entire. The leaves are dark green, shiny above, occasionally hairy below, and turn bright crimson in autumn.

The **fruit** is dark blue, fleshy, approximately ½ inch in length, and borne in clusters of 1–3 on long, slender stems. The fruit has an acid taste, but is edible.

The **twigs** are moderately stout with a diaphragmed pith.

The **wood** is heavy, fine-grained, very tough but not durable. It was formerly used for the hubs of wheels and soles of shoes. It is now used principally for pulp.



Black tupelo has a characteristic horizontal branching pattern.

