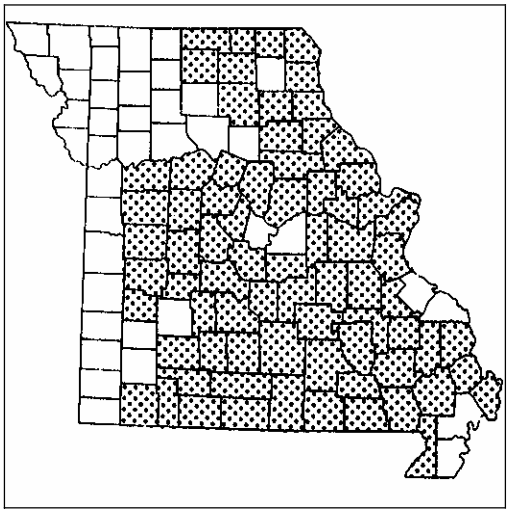
Butternut

Juglans cinerea L.

First cousin to black walnut, butternut is also called white walnut, American white walnut and oil nut. The tree is perhaps better known in some areas for its oily but edible nuts than for its lumber. It is widely distributed over the eastern two-thirds of the state and not often found on prairie sites.

The wood is a soft tan, buttery or light brown to fawn color. The bark is light gray to brown, furrowed into broad, flat ridges. The texture of the wood is rather coarse and its grain closely resembles black walnut. Like black walnut, its color varies considerably between trees. The wood is semi-ring porous. Butternut is lightweight, soft and easily worked. It machines and sands well, although it is noticeably softer than black walnut. It is a good cabinet wood, kiln dries easily, and is stable when dry. It is too weak for some uses.

Butternut has been used for paneling where its lighter color is an asset, and it is used in furniture. In the olden days, it was a favorite of architects because its lustrous and satiny appearance gave dignity and luxury to design. Limited amounts of veneer and lumber are available because the overall supply appears to be diminishing. Butternut is a nice wood for home workshops, and a favorite of wood carvers. The sticky hairs of the husk of the nut carry a strong brown dye that does not wash off easily.

Hoss