DISCLAIMER:
To the best of our knowledge, the edible history and medicinal uses of these plants are accurate. However, the authors and publisher of this field guide **do not recommend** eating plants that grow in Gowanus or in unclean soil. Additionally, many poisonous plants can easily be confused for edible plants.

We stress that you **do not eat or use medicinally** any part of any cultivated or wild plant until you have verified with your healthcare professional that they are non-toxic and safe for you to consume and touch and until you have had their identifications verified by an expert in the field.

Neither the publisher nor the authors accept responsibility for any effects that may arise from eating wild plants.

Cover photo: Diana Gruberg
TREES & SHRUBS
GOWANUS FIELD GUIDE

2020 EDITION

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GOWANUS CANAL CONSERVANCY
### TREES & SHRUBS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACER RUBRUM • Red Maple</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AILANTHUS ALTISSIMA • Tree of Heaven</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMELANCHIER SPP. • Serviceberry</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACCHARIS HALIMIFOLIA • Groundsel-bush</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BETULA NIGRA • River Birch</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERCIS CANADENSIS • Eastern Redbud</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLETHRA ALNIFOLIA • Summersweet Clethra</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GINKGO BILOBA • Ginkgo</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLEDITSIA TRIACANTHOS • Honey Locust</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IVA FRUTESCENS • Bigleaf Marsh Elder</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUNIPERUS VIRGINIANA • Eastern Red Cedar</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIQUIDAMBAR STYRACIFLUA • Sweet Gum</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MORUS ALBA • White Mulberry</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAULOWNIA TOMENTOSA • Princess Tree</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POPULUS SPP. • Poplar</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRUNUS SEROTINA • Black Cherry</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUERCUS COCCINEA • Scarlet Oak</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUERCUS PALUSTRIS • Pin Oak</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHUS TYPHINA • Staghorn Sumac</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROBINIA PSEUDOACACIA • Black Locust</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROSA PALUSTRIS • Swamp Rose</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROSA ‘RADRAZZ’ KNOCK OUT • Knock Out Rose</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAXODIUM DISTICHUM • Bald Cypress</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### LEAF CONFIGURATIONS .............................................30

### CITATIONS & CREDITS ...............................................32
**ACER RUBRUM**  
*Red Maple*

**Family:** Sapindaceae  
**Native to:** East/Central North America  
**Habitat:** Wide range of conditions including swamps and poorly drained soils

**Material uses:** Boiled inner bark creates a purple color that can be mixed with lead sulphate to create a black dye and used as ink\(^1\). Wood is used for basket splints\(^2\) and furniture making, but is not strong despite being hard and heavy (38 lb per cubic foot)\(^3\).

**Edible:** Leaves are used to wrap and preserve apples and root crops\(^4\). Sap can be extracted as syrup\(^5\) - only yields half of the quantity of sugar maple (A. saccharum)\(^6\). Seedlings, fresh in spring, or dried. Wings are removed and seeds can be boiled and eaten\(^7\).

**Medicinal value:** Cramps and dysentery have been treated by an infusion of the bark\(^8\).

**Other:** Most abundant native tree in North America.

**Gowanus:** Native tree planted as street tree found on 9th and 1st streets in Gowanus.
AILANTHUS ALTISSIMA
• Tree of Heaven

Family: Simaroubaceae
Native to: China, Taiwan and north Korea
Habitat: Disturbed areas along roads, abandoned mines, urban areas

Leaves: Alternate
Height: 80-100'

Ecological value: Rapidly growing (3-6' per year), short lived tree. Pollution tolerant. Used to re-vegetate acid mine spoils¹. Extensive root structures are suitable for soil stabilization². Food source of butterflies, moths, arthropods and fungi in native habitat. Host plant of silkworms (Samia cynthia).

Material uses: Lumber, yellow dye and paper making (high content of cellulose). Crushed leaves and flowers as insect-repellent³. Plant parts steeped in water as insecticide⁴.

Medicinal value: Almost every part of the tree is used in traditional Chinese medicine.


Phytoremediation: Heavy metals including hexavalent chromium⁶.

Gowanus: Very common spontaneous non-native tree that emerges wherever it can in Gowanus: along the banks of the canal, fence lines, sidewalks, and in garden spaces.

Yellow to red fall foliage. Can be confused with Juglans cinerea, Juglans nigra or Rhus spp. Ailanthus leaves have distinctive notch at base with gland on underside.

Clusters of seeds, each one measuring around 1-2”. Prolific production.

Bark

Gowanus Field Guide: Trees & Shrubs
Gowanus Canal Conservancy
**AMELANCHIER SPP.**  
• **Serviceberry**

*Family:* Rosaceae  
*Native to:* Eastern North America  
*Habitat:* Coastal plains.

**Ecological value:** Source of food for birds.  
**Material uses:** Strong wood, used for tool handles¹.  
**Edible:** Fruit can be prepared like raisins, eaten raw and used in pies and preserves². Rich in iron and copper³.  
**Medicinal value:** Dried berries or berry juice used traditionally by Native Americans as eye and ear drops, to treat upset stomachs or as a laxative⁴.  
**Other:** Used as dwarf rootstock for crabapple and pear-tree spp⁵. Wind tolerant and used in shelterbelts.  
**Gowanus:** Native shrub genus with many species planted in gardens in Gowanus, including at Degraw Street West and at the Salt Lot.

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1. Strong wood, used for tool handles.  
2. Fruit can be prepared like raisins, eaten raw and used in pies and preserves.  
4. Dried berries or berry juice used traditionally by Native Americans.  
5. Used as dwarf rootstock for crabapple and pear-tree spp.  

---

**Red, orange fall foliage**

**Total leaf length:** 2 - 3"  
**Bark.**
**Baccharis halimifolia**  
- **Groundsel-bush**

**Family:** Asteraceae  
**Native to:** Eastern and southern parts of the US, the Bahamas and Cuba  
**Habitat:** Wetlands, salty or brackish shores, disturbed areas, ditches and old fields

**Ecological value:** Flowers provide abundant nectar for various species of caterpillars, including the Monarch butterfly. The dense foliage provides cover for wildlife.

**Edible:** The seeds are toxic.

**Medicinal value:** In Southern Louisiana it has traditionally been used to treat inflamed kidneys.

**Other:** Small white, silky flowers. Bare in winter. Hedge for coastal environments and salt tolerant. Extensive root system that binds sand/soil. Good fuel source due to secretions of resin from leaves and stem, although plant is relatively small. Baccharis has alternate leaf arrangement as opposed to *Iva frutescens*, which is opposite.

**Gowanus:** Native shrub found at the upper elevations of the high salt marsh in Gowanus, along the Salt Lot’s coastal edge and rain gardens.
**BETULA NIGRA**

- **River Birch**

**Family:** Betulaceae  
**Native to:** Eastern US  
**Habitat:** Floodplains and swamps

**Ecological value:** Hosts moths and butterflies whose caterpillars eat the foliage, including Mourning Cloak butterfly and Luna, Polyphemus and Cecropia moths. These insects become food sources for birds, along with the birch seeds during fall and winter seasons.  
**Material uses:** Young branches can be used for whisks and brooms\(^1\). Wood may be used for furniture-making but is contorted and knotty, though light and strong (weighs 36 lb per cubic foot).  
**Edible:** Extracted sap may be consumed raw or cooked\(^2\): Native Americans traditionally boiled the sap to create a syrup similar to maple syrup. Fermented sap can be used as vinegar or beer\(^3\).  
**Medicinal value:** Highly valued in a variety of folk/traditional medicines world-wide (Betula genus). From B. nigra, a balm can be made from boiled buds and sulfur to cure ringworm and skin sores\(^4\), leaves chewed or as infusion against dysentery\(^5\).  
**Other:** Heat-tolerant cold weather trees. Used for erosion control - extensive root system.  
**Phytoremediation:** Heavy metals including, Manganese (Mn), Iron (Fe), Zinc (Zn), Cadmium (Cd) and Lead (Pb)\(^6\).  
**Gowanus:** Native tree planted in the 3rd and 3rd Garden, Gil Hodges Garden and occasionally as a street tree.
**CERCIS CANADENSIS**  
*Eastern Redbud*

**Family:** Fabaceae  
**Native to:** Eastern and Central North America  
**Habitat:** Understory tree, found along river banks and streams, forests, bluffs and ravine.

**Ecological value:** Attracts pollinators including bees. Seeds are eaten by bobwhite birds and a few songbirds and squirrels, but are not a highly desirable source of food.

**Material uses:** Red dye can be extracted from roots. Bark of shoots is used for making baskets.

**Edible:** Flowers can be cooked, pickled or eaten raw and are rich in vitamin C.

**Medicinal value:** A tea made from the bark can be used to treat diarrhea, dysentery, fevers, and leukemia.

**Other:** Dislikes ‘wet feet’, clay and/or dry soils. Fast growing, but often short lived in wild. Begins flowering on the trunk and branches once the tree is around 2-4 meters in height. Flowers from March to May. Despite it being a member of the Fabaceae family, it does not fix atmospheric nitrogen in the soil.

**Phytoremediation:** Petroleum degradation.

**Gowanus:** Native tree planted at the Salt Lot, 2nd Avenue Garden, and street trees along Bond Street.
**CLETHRA ALNIFOLIA**  
- *Summersweet Clethra*

**Family:** Clethraceae  
**Native to:** Eastern US  
**Habitat:** Wet forests, wetlands, along streams

**Ecological value:** Attracts pollinators, including birds.  
**Material uses:** Stalk of blossom can be used as a soap substitute.  
**Other:** Good for erosion control. Fragrant.  
**Gowanus:** Native shrub planted in rain gardens at the Salt Lot and along 6th Street as well as at Gil Hodges Community Garden.

*Total leaf length: 3-4”*
GINKGO BILOBA
• Ginkgo

Family: Ginkgoaceae
Native to: China
Habitat: Deciduous forests, valleys

Material uses: Oil for fuel and soap. Wood is soft and light and repels insects.

Edible: Seed may be cooked (to destroy any possible toxicity) and eaten, with a flavor similar to pine nuts. Can be used in soups and stews. High in protein, low in fat.

Medicinal value: Leaves contain several health-beneficial phytochemicals. Used to treat many ailments such as high blood pressure, tinnitus, asthma and bronchitis.

Other: Listed as a threatened and endangered species, due to its rarity in the wild. The tree was thought extinct but had been preserved by Chinese monks through cultivation in two small areas of China, over a period of 1,000 years. Fossils date this tree back to 270 million years. Can live more than 2,500 years. 6 trees planted in Hiroshima in the mid 1800’s survived the nuclear bomb attack.

Phytoremediation: Accumulation of heavy metals.

Gowanus: Non-native tree commonly planted as a street tree throughout Gowanus.

Bright yellow fall foliage.
Female trees shed pink, stinky berries.
**GLEDITSIA TRIACANTHOS**  
*Honey Locust*

**Family:** Fabaceae  
**Native to:** Central North America  
**Habitat:** Plains, urban areas

**Ecological value:** Tolerant of a variety of conditions, including compacted soil, drought, heat, and alkaline soil. Fast growing pioneer species, first to emerge in disturbed or barren environments. Fixes atmospheric nitrogen.

**Material uses:** The heartwood contains tannin. Timber is strong, hard and durable, weighing 42 lb per cubic foot\(^1\) and is used for rails, fencing and in construction\(^2\).

**Edible:** Young seed can be eaten raw\(^3\) or cooked and has a pea-like flavor. The sweet pulp can be made into sugar or eaten raw. A drink can also be made from the pods\(^4\). Seeds may be roasted and used as a coffee substitute\(^5\).

**Medicinal value:** Pods can be brewed into a tea to treat ailments of indigestion, measles, smallpox, whooping cough etc\(^6\). Might contain anticancer compounds\(^7\).

**Phytoremediation:** Petroleum degradation\(^8\). Used to reclaim mining spoils\(^9\).

**Gowanus:** Native tree; the thornless variety is a very common street tree throughout Gowanus.

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**Leaves:** Alternate  
**Height:** 60-100'
IVA FRUTESCENS
• Bigleaf Marsh Elder

Family: Asteraceae
Native to: Coastal eastern North America
Habitat: Wetlands

Ecological value: Attracts birds.
Other: Highly salt tolerant and tolerant of soils with poor drainage. Iva frutescens has opposite leaf arrangement, as opposed to Baccharis, which is alternate.
Gowanus: Found in high salt marsh along the Salt Lot's coastal edge and rain gardens.
**JUNIPERUS VIRGINIANA**  
• Eastern Red Cedar

**Family:** Cupressaceae.  
**Native to:** Eastern North America.  
**Habitat:** Prairies, oak barrens, old pastures, and disturbed areas.

**Ecological value:** The berry is an important food source for birds during winter.  
**Material uses:** Fragrant and rot resistant wood. Essential oil from wood\(^1\) can be added to soaps, deodorants, perfumes, or used as an insecticide (moth repellent). The wood is used in furniture making (insect resistant) and both durable and light (30 lbs per cubic foot)\(^2\).  
**Edible:** Cones are used to flavor gin. Crushed berries are used as flavorings in stews and soups\(^3\).  
**Medicinal value:** Traditionally used by Native Americans. Treats mouth ulcers. Can be brewed as tea to treat colds, rheumatism and worms. Contains the anticancer compound podophyllotoxin\(^4\).  
**Other:** Pioneer species, first to emerge in disturbed or barren environments, and can live to over 900 years. Widely used as a shelterbelt species to protect from wind during the 1930’s Dust Bowl drought. Very drought tolerant. Needles that fall raise the pH of soil to alkaline, causing it to hold onto nutrients such as phosphorus and making it difficult for plants to access them. *J. virginiana* also removes nitrogen from soil\(^5\) and has proven to reduce soil carbon which results in less microbial diversity.\(^6\)  
**Phytoremediation:** Benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene\(^7\).

**Gowanus:** Native evergreen tree planted along the coastal edge at the salt lot and in the 3rd and 3rd street garden.
LIQUIDAMBAR STYRACIFLUA
• Sweet Gum

Family: Altingiaceae
Native to: Eastern North America through Central America
Habitat: Moist woods, coastal plains

Ecological value: Seed ball attracts birds.
Material uses: Important commercial hardwood, used in plywood, furniture, railroad ties, crates, floors and wood pulp. Fairly hard wood that is fine grained (weighs 37 lb per cubic foot). An aromatic resin (Styrex) can be obtained, by beating trunk of tree in spring. The resin is used as fragrance, soap and adhesive. It can also be chewed to clean teeth.
Edible: Chewing gum can be made from tree resin.
Medicinal value: The resin has antiseptic properties and is chewed to treat sore throats, coughs, asthma, dysentery. Can be applied externally to treat wounds, ringworm and scabies.
Other: The species was introduced to Europe in 1681.
Phytoremediation: Uranium (U) and Thorium (Th), trichlorethylene.
Gowanus: Native tree planted as a street tree intermittently in Gowanus.
MORUS ALBA
• White Mulberry

Family: Moraceae  
Native to: China  
Habitat: Rich, moist soils, sun/part-shade  
Fields, forest margins, roads, and in disturbed soils

Ecological value: Food source for birds.  
Material uses: Leaves used in China since at least 2600 B.C. as the primary diet for silkworms. Introduced into colonial N. America to establish a silk industry. Fiber from bark is used for weaving. Bark from stem used in paper-making. Twigs are used in baskets. Wood is a source of ethanol and valued in furniture and sports equipment.

Edible: Fruit can be eaten. Rich flavor develops if fruit is dried. Young leaves and shoots can be cooked.

Medicinal value: Used to treat ailments such as colds, influenza, eye infections and nosebleeds.

Other: Tree produces berries from June to August. The non-native white mulberry is out competing and replacing native red mulberry (Morus rubra) through hybridization and a harmful root disease.

Phytoremediation: Heavy metals such as lead, cadmium, zinc and copper.

Gowanus: Common spontaneous non-native tree can be found along the canal.

Leaves: Alternate  
Height: 30-50'

Generally a variety of 'mitten'-like leaf shapes. Serrated margins. Bright yellow fall foliage.

Prolific fruiter that attracts birds.

Fruit

Bark
PAULOWNIA TOMENTOSA
• Princess Tree

Family: Paulowniaceae
Native to: Central and Western China
Habitat: Disturbed areas, waste sites, urban areas

Ecological value: In its native range is considered a pioneer species as it regenerates rapidly, stabilizes soil with roots, and replenishes soil with its nitrogen-rich leaves. It is eventually succeeded by taller trees as is intolerant of shade. Survives wildfires.

Edible: Flowers are traditionally eaten with miso. Cooked leaves may be eaten as an emergency food.

Material uses: Seeds used as packaging material in crates by Chinese exporters in 19th C. before the development of styrofoam packing peanuts. When packaging cases break during transit, seed pods spread in new environment. Fast growing hardwood, lightweight and durable. Insect resistant.

Medicinal value: A liquid extraction of the leaves is said to promote hair growth and prevent graying. Destroys intestinal worms and parasites, astringent for warts.

Other: In China, a Princess tree was traditionally planted at the birth of a girl and cut down and carved into wooden items for her dowry.

Phytoremediation: Heavy metals and hydrocarbons.

Gowanus: Very common spontaneous non-native tree can be found along the banks of the canal and along sidewalk cracks and fence lines.

Bronze fall foliage. During spring, entire tree is covered in purple blossoms.
POPULUS SPP.  
• Poplar

Family: Salicaceae  
Native to: Canada to Mexico.  
Habitat: Stream banks and low areas, upland woods, disturbed areas

Ecological value: Hosts an array of birds, mammals and butterflies, including Eastern Tiger Swallowtail and Viceroy.  
Material uses: The wood is strong but soft - used in making matches, paper and packaging (wood wool). Wood that has been heat treated is used in the interior of saunas and in Russia. The wood is used for making thin slats for roofing.  
Edible: Inner bark, raw or cooked, can be ground into a flour. Catkins can be eaten raw or cooked, but have a bitter.  
Medicinal value: Used by Native Americans for its antiseptic and analgesic qualities, but has a long list of applications (against excessive menstrual bleeding, fevers, infections, digestive disorders).  
Other: Short lived, often plagued by disease and insect problems. Pioneer species.  
Gowanus: Genus of native tree species that can be found growing along the canal in colonies at the Salt Lot.

Leaves: Alternate  
Height: 65-80’

*Populus tremuloides* has a flat petiole, which reduces aerodynamic drag when windy, reducing damage to branches. This is why the tree is called 'quaking aspen' - the leaves 'tremble' in the wind.

Female and male catkins on separate trees  
Up to 2.5" long  
Catkin
**PRUNUS SEROTINA**  
• Black Cherry

**Family:** Rosaceae  
**Native to:** North and South America  
**Habitat:** Fields and sunny areas

**Ecological value:** Food source for birds and small mammals.  
**Material uses:** Green dye can be extracted from leaves and dark green/grey dye from fruit. Wood is strong and weighs about 36 lb per cubic foot and is used in furniture. Wood can be used for smoking foods.  
**Edible:** Ripe fruit can be eaten raw or cooked in stews, jams and pies or used as flavoring in liqueurs, sodas and ice creams. Seeds and leaves contain hydrogen cyanide and are toxic, and in high doses can be fatal.  
**Medicinal value:** Commonly used by Native Americans for a variety of ailments including alleviation of early labor pains, fevers, colds, diarrhea and dysentery.  
**Other:** Often grows in companionship with black walnut, black locust and hackberry.  
**Gowanus:** Spontaneous and planted native tree emerges along the banks of the canal.

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Yellow, orange, red fall foliage.  
Tree can be confused with *P. virginiana* (chokecherry), which has broader leaves and hairs in vein axils on underside of leaf.
QUERCUS COCCINEA
• Scarlet Oak

Family: Fagaceae
Native to: Central and eastern US
Habitat: Sandy, acidic soils

Leaves: Alternate.    Height: 60' - 100'

Ecological value: Food source for small mammals and birds including blue-jays and red-headed woodpeckers.
Material uses: Mulch of leaves serves as an insect repellent for grubs and slugs, although fresh leaves may inhibit plant growth¹. Vacated insect galls in leaves contain high amounts of tannin and can be used in dyeing². Wood is strong and heavy, weighing 46 lbs per cubic foot and is used in construction and furniture³.
Edible: Cooked seeds, dried and ground into a powder can be added to cereals, stews and bread. Roasted seed is a coffee substitute⁴.
Medicinal value: Galls are a strong astringent Can be used to treat dysentery and diarrhea⁵.
Other: Popular as an ornamental tree with a bright red fall color.
Gowanus: Native tree occasionally planted as a street tree.

Pointed leaf tips. Can be confused with Q. rubra or Q. palustris. Deep red fall foliage.

Entire nut: 1/2 - 1" long

Bark

Total leaf length: 4-5"

Egg-shaped, brownish acorn 0.5 - 1"
QUERCUS PALUSTRIS
• Pin Oak

Family: Fagaceae
Native to: Eastern US
Habitat: Floodplain and soils with high clay content
Leaves: Alternate. Height: 100’

Ecological value: Only host of the Bucculatrix domicola caterpillar.
Material uses: Mulch of dried leaves repels slugs and grubs¹. Black ink can be made from abandoned galls (larva of different insects often produce galls, which are growths on leaves or branches, in the form of lumps or complicated structures). Wood is used for furniture and is strong, often knotty (weighs 43 lb per cubic ft)².
Edible: Seed can be eaten after bitter tannins have been washed out. Roasted seed is a coffee substitute.
Medicinal value: Galls are strongly astringent and can be used to treat chronic diarrhea, dysentery and hemorrhages.³
Other: Pioneer species. Used in landscaping due to its pollution tolerance.
Gowanus: Native tree very commonly planted as a street tree in Gowanus, including along 3rd Ave, Smith street and President street.
RHUS TYPHINA
• Staghorn Sumac

Family: Anacardiaceae
Native to: Eastern North America
Habitat: Forest edges, disturbed areas, edges of roads

Ecological value: Erosion control, windbreak. Low canopy.
Material uses: Leaves contain 48% tannin, and can be collected as they fall in autumn and used as brown dye or mordant. Bark and fruits also rich in tannin. Yellow dye can be extracted from roots, orange dye from inner bark. Black ink is made from boiling leaves and stems. Oil from seeds can be used to make candles (emit pungent smoke). Pipes have been made from young shoots to draw sap from sugar maple. Wood is soft and brittle (27 lbs per cubic foot) - used as rough wood in construction, can be turned on a lathe.
Edible: Fruit is soaked, washed and strained to make a lemonade. Dried leaves and berries have been traditionally smoked, mixed with tobacco. Seeds are used as a spice.
Medicinal value: Used by Native Americans. Infusion increases lactation flow of a nursing mother. Treats venereal diseases, diarrhea, stomatitis, improvement of appetite, used as an astringent. Sap can be used to treat warts.
Other: Beekeepers use seed head as a fuel for smokers.
Phytoremediation: Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

Gowanus: Spontaneous and planted native shrub can be found growing along the canal at Degraw street east and at the Salt Lot.
ROBINIA PSEUDOACACIA
• Black Locust

Family: Fabaceae
Native to: Eastern and central US
Habitat: Woodlands, prairies, pastures, urban areas

Ecological value: Fixes nitrogen in the soil. Attracts pollinators and seeds are eaten by birds and squirrels.
Material uses: Highly valued oil can be extracted from seed, used in perfumery. The bark produces a yellow dye and it dyes cotton to a brown-orange shade. Paper, silk and wool can be made from the bark, timber is hard and strong (weighing 45 lbs per cubic foot) and used for shipbuilding, fence posts, floors and as a fuel-wood. It is a rot resistant wood, currently being used in Europe in outdoor applications in lieu of tropical species such as Ipe.
Edible: Entire tree is generally considered toxic, besides flowers, which can be used in jams and drinks. Toxins are destroyed by heat.
Medicinal value: Used to treat eye ailments, toothaches and the flower is believed to contain the anti-tumor compound benzoaldehyde.
Other: Used in erosion control. Pioneer species - rapid growth, thrives in a variety of soils.
Phytoremediation: Phytostabilization of heavy metals such as Zinc (Zn), Cadmium (Cd), Lead (Pb) and Sodium (Na).
Gowanus: Spontaneous native tree can be found at the Salt Lot and along the canal growing in colonies that spread tenaciously.

Leaves: Alternate
Height: 40-100’

Leaflet length: 1”

Bright yellow fall foliage.

Clusters of seed pods, measuring about 2-3” each.

Round leaflets with smooth margins. Thorns on branches, though there are varieties without.

Seed
Bark
**ROSA PALUSTRIS**  
- Swamp Rose

**Family:** Rosaceae  
**Native to:** Eastern US  
**Habitat:** Marshes, meadows, fields, shores of rivers and lakes, swamps and edges of wetlands

**Ecological value:** Attracts pollinators including birds and insects. Caterpillars of Parasa indetermina (Stinging Rose Caterpillar) feed off foliage and birds eat fruits.  
**Medicinal value:** Native Americans made a tea of bark and roots to treat worms, dysentery, and diarrhea¹.  
**Other:** Very fragrant.  
**Gowanus:** Native shrub planted in rain gardens along the 6th street Green Corridor.

*Length of leaflet: 1.5-2.5”*  
*Generally 7 leaflets, occasionally 5 or 9, up to 2.5” long.*  
*June - July bloom*
ROSA 'RADRAZZ' KNOCK OUT
• Knock Out Rose

Family: Rosaceae
Native to: Asia
Knock Out roses are bred from two distinct rose groups and at least eight cultivars¹.
Habitat: Mainly used in gardens and borders

Ecological value: Attracts butterflies.
Edible: Petals, buds and fruits from several species of roses are used in fruit teas and jams². The fruit (rose hip) from Rosa canina contains vitamin C.
Material uses: Used in commercial perfumery and for slope stabilization.
Medicinal value: Used in traditional Chinese medicine. Research on the cancer inhibiting properties of phenolic antioxidant compounds found in Rosa chinensis is currently underway³.
Other: Rose thorns are prickles (thorns are modified stems, while prickles are outgrowths of the epidermis), which allows the rose to hang onto other vegetation when growing. It is believed that the densely-packed prickles in Rosa rugosa and Rosa pimpinellifolia are used to trap sand and reduce erosion to protect their roots, as both species naturally occur on coastal sand dunes. The prickles also reduce activity from browsing mammals, although deer still enjoy eating the flowers and leaves. Tolerant of air pollution. Low care.
Phytoremediation: Promise shown using Rosa pulverulenta for remediation of soils contaminated with heavy metals such as cadmium, aluminum, and silicone⁴.
Gowanus: Non-native shrub used as a common landscape plant. Planted in the rain garden at Carroll St. and Bond St.
**TAXODIUM DISTICHUM**

- *Bald Cypress*

**Family:** Cupressaceae  
**Native to:** Southeastern and Gulf coastal plains in the US  
**Habitat:** Inundated soils along riparian wetlands.

**Ecological value:** Nesting habitat for birds, provides seeds for small mammals, hosts moth *Isoparce cupressi*, the Bald cypress sphinx moth.

**Material uses:** Bark can be used for rope¹. Wood is light (28 lbs per cubic foot)² and not very durable. Used for water pipes, shingles, and general construction.

**Medicinal value:** Resin from cones can be used as a pain reliever for wounds³.

**Other:** The trunk is surrounded by cypress ‘knees,’ knob-like growths poking out of ground or water, thought to be support structures for main trunk. Can grow to be more than 1,700 years old, and once dominated swamplands in the southeast US. Can withstand hurricane-strength winds. Can easily be confused with Dawn Redwood, which has an opposite leaf arrangement, unlike Bald Cypress, which is alternate.

**Phytoremediation:** Sewage effluent and potential heavy metals⁴.

**Gowanus:** Found at the Salt Lot and along the canal growing in colonies that spread tenaciously. Planted as a street tree including along Nevins and Baltic streets.

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¹ Bark can be used for rope.

² Wood is light (28 lbs per cubic foot) and not very durable.

³ Resin from cones can be used as a pain reliever for wounds.

⁴ Sewage effluent and potential heavy metals.
LEAF CONFIGURATIONS

Compound leaves

- Trifoliate
- Odd-pinnate
- Even-pinnate
- Palmatisect
- Palmate

Simple leaves

- Crenate
- Incised
- Sinuate
- Lobed
- Entire
- Serrate (toothed)
- Serrulate
- Doubly serrate
- Dentrate
Compound leaf anatomy

Leaf arrangements on stem

Opposite

Sub-opposite

Alternate

Whorled
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TAXODIUM DISTICHUM, BALD CYPRESS

Text: Christine Facella. Images: Christine Facella. Layout: Christine Facella.