



The ARNOLD
ARBORETUM
of HARVARD UNIVERSITY

125 Arborway
Boston, MA 02130-3500



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In our Collection

The *Carya* Collection

Jonathan Damery, Curatorial Fellow

Walking along Valley Road at the Arboretum, even the most botanically inclined observer may pass the hickory collection (*Carya* spp.) without giving it a second glance. With showier trees and shrubs planted in the understory, the unassuming trees in this collection tend to meld into the background. Nonetheless, hickories are a noble lot and have always been among the core groups of plants grown in the Arboretum's living collection.

Hickories are prominent trees in the woodlands of eastern North America, so it is no surprise that this group of plants readily attracted the attention of founding director Charles Sprague Sargent. Always keen to detect the subtleties of botanical variation, Sargent named 44 species, varieties, and hybrids of hickories between 1913 and 1918. Although many of these names are now considered synonyms, the plants he acquired from around the country are the foundation of the exceptional *Carya* collection found at the Arboretum today.

The hickory collection currently boasts 105 plants representing 13 taxa, and is recognized as a national collection by the North American Plant Collections Consortium. Nearly 50 of the trees date to Sargent's work with the genus, and 39 are among the Arboretum's esteemed centenarians. Two individuals grafted from the wild plants Sargent based his type descriptions on still survive—*Carya* × *schneckii*, an unusual hybrid of the pecan (*C. illinoensis*) and the mockernut hickory (*C. tomentosa*), and *C. alba* var. *ovoidea*, now considered a synonym for *C. tomentosa*.

The value of this collection does not derive merely from its historical significance. The Arboretum still acquires new accessions from around the country as staff continue to evaluate and improve the collection's genetic and taxonomic diversity. In fact, since 2006, the Arboretum has accessioned 16 new wild-collected plants in the genus. Come visit this spring and summer for a walk through the hickories, and enjoy their humble grandeur. ♪



Both: Jon Hetman

At top, the common name of *Carya ovata*—shagbark hickory—describes the most striking and distinguishing feature of this native tree. *At left*, the male flowers of the monoecious hickories are borne in catkins on old wood or in the axils of the previous season's leaves.