

## **EASTERN HOP-HORNBEAM** *Ostrya virginiana* (Mill.) K. Koch

Eastern hop-hornbeam or ironwood is a small tree with either an open or rounded crown. It reaches a height of 20 - 30 feet, and a diameter of 6 - 10 inches. The branches are long and slender, and the ends are somewhat drooping.

It is a fairly rapid grower, especially in good soil. It grows on slopes and ridges having a dry, gravelly soil, and is often found in the shade of other species.

The **bark** is gray, separates easily into thin, narrow scales, becoming finer and stringy on older trees.

The **leaves** are either egg-shaped in outline or nearly oblong, widest in the middle, hairy on both surfaces, alternate, sharply toothed, and 2 - 3 inches long. They are somewhat like those of yellow birch.



The **flowers** occur in catkins which open with the leaf buds. The male catkins are pre-formed in the fall and are usually in clusters of 3.

The **fruit** is bladder-like, encloses a ribbed nutlet, and occurs in clusters. It ripens in September. The name "hop-hornbeam" refers to the fruit which closely resembles the true hops.

The **twigs** are light brown, fine, tough and wiry, and have a small green pith.

The **wood** is very close-grained, heavy, very strong, and is exceedingly hard when seasoned. It is used for tool handles and wedges for directional felling of trees.