

# Black Locust Tree

Robinia pseudoacacia

**Common Names:** Black locust tree

**Species Affected:** Horses, cattle, chickens, children

**Description:** A medium-sized deciduous tree, averaging 60 feet tall and 1 – 2.5 feet across the main trunk at maturity. The trunk is usually short, with deeply-furrowed scaly bark. It divides 10 – 15 feet above the ground into several stout branches, which are smooth with sharp thorns. Leaves are approximately 14” long and pinnate, with 7 – 21 leaflets per leaf. Leaf bases on twigs have paired spines. Flowers are white and highly scented, arranged in dangling 4 – 8” clusters of 10 – 25 blooms. Seeds form within flat dark brown seed pods which are 2 – 4” long.

**Growing Location and Timing:** Native to the eastern United States, but have become naturalized across the country and southwards. Tolerates a wide range of soil conditions, but intolerant of shade and high water tables. Establishes well in disturbed areas/early successional communities. Flowers bloom May – June. Seedpods form in the fall and persist through the winter.

**Toxin:** The toxalbumin compounds robinine and phasin

**Toxic Plant Parts:** Bark, seeds, and new growth contain the highest levels of toxins, but leaves, flowers, and seed pods are also toxic. There are a few documented cases of serious injuries caused by puncture wounds from thorns.

**Possible Effects on Livestock:** dehydration, rapid & irregular heartbeat, rapid & shallow respiration, pale mucous membranes, depression, occasional evidence of abdominal pain, diarrhea, nervousness, dilated pupils, muscle weakness, liver injury, seizures, neurological effects, possible death in horses

**Preventative Measures:** Goats can be used as a form of grazing control as they are less susceptible to the toxicity than other livestock. The tree produces readily via suckers, clones, and sprouts, so mechanical control without herbicidal assistance is not recommended. If black locust exposure is suspected, contact a veterinarian or Poison Control immediately.

*Resources:*

- <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/BlackLocust.pdf>
- [Guide to Poisonous Plants – College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences – Colorado State University \(colostate.edu\)](#)
- [BlackLocustBCP.pdf \(msu.edu\)](#)
- [Are Black Locust Trees Toxic? | Poison Control](#)



Photo from Colorado State University.



Photo from National Capital Poison Center.



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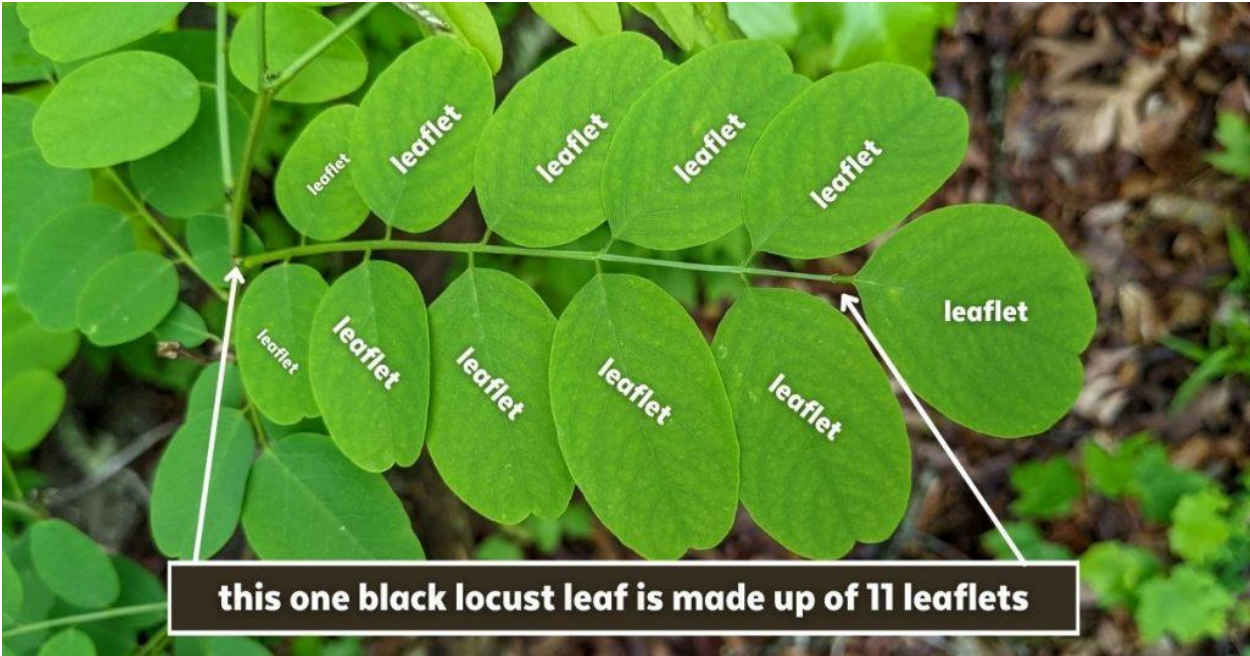


Photo from Unrulygardening.com.