

2026 Native Plant of Distinction: American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*)



Lake Erie Allegheny Partnership
for Biodiversity
leapbio.org



Photos by Tom Potterfield (top), Purdue University
(middle) & Minnesota Wildflowers (bottom)

Unique Characteristics

American hornbeam is unique for its smooth, gray, muscular-looking bark (lending to its nicknames “musclewood” or “blue beech”) and its heavy, hard wood. It has distinctive, doubly-serrated leaves with prominent veins. Hornbeam is a member of the birch family & can be found along streams and riverbanks.

Plant Type: Tree

Native Range: Eastern North America, Mexico

Sun: Shade to part sun

Water: Moist, but adaptable to drier sites.

Soil: Rich, acidic soils along streams.

Height: 20 to 35 feet

Spread: 20 to 30 feet

Wildlife: Small mammals and a variety of birds eat the nutlets, buds, and leaves. Host plant for E. tiger swallowtail, red-spotted admiral, and striped hairstreak butterflies.

Hardiness Zones: 3 to 10

Bloom Time: Catkins in early spring

Fall Color: Yellow to orange/red

Uses: Exceptionally hard wood makes great tool handles; ornamental landscape tree



April is

*Ohio Native
Plant Month*