



Blackgum

Nyssa sylvatica

Tupelo Family (Nyssaceae)

Zones: 3-9

Full Sun

Moderate to High Water

Location: Four Seasons Garden

The Blackgum is a highly desirable tree of many gardeners for its glossy, dark green leaves and brilliantly showy fall colors that range from purple to red, orange and florescent yellow. This is a deciduous tree with a pyramidal form. The generic botanical name is taken from the Greek water nymph, *Nyssa*, and *sylvatica*, which means "of the woods".

In spring, small greenish white flowers emerge and later small, blue berries. Bees and butterflies are attracted to the flowers and birds feed on the fruit. Scientists believe that the early turning of leaf color in the fall signals birds for migration and also attracts them to the fruit.

This tree grows between 30 to 50 feet in height and 20 to 30 feet wide. The rate of growth for this tree is slow and it can be difficult to transplant due to its long tap root. These trees are long-lived and some specimens in the east have been aged at over 450 years old.

In the summer, it provides light shade and is a good use as a street tree or. This is one of the few that will tolerate poor drainage. Not much pruning is needed, but the lower branches will droop with age and will need to be removed.

It makes a good companion tree for swamp cottonwoods, water oaks and bald cypress. The lumber is heavy, hard and cross-grained, which makes it a good use for rough floors, pallets, and firewood.