

# *Populus trichocarpa*

## Black cottonwood, western balsam-poplar, California poplar



*Populus trichocarpa* (Western balsam poplar, black cottonwood, California poplar) was discovered in the western part of North America in 1892. This is the fastest growing and largest balsam poplar, which in cultivation can reach heights of 30 metres, and in its natural habitat it can even reach heights of 60 metres. Its upright branches grow in wreaths and together, they form an irregular, wide oval to round open crown with a width of up to 15 metres. This western balsam poplar naturally grows on the banks of rivers and streams. It is a real pioneer species that colonises flooded surfaces.

The leaves of *Populus trichocarpa* are large, leather-like and dark green and have a ciliate edge. The undersides of the leaves are white, with a very defined orange grain. The budding leaves emit a strong balsam fragrance which can be smelled from 100 metres away. They turn a brilliant yellow in autumn. Male trees bloom red catkins and female trees bloom smaller, green catkins in March. The capsules of female trees disperse cotton-like seeds in May.

The western balsam poplar does not tolerate shade and solves this problem by growing so fast that other trees cannot cast a shadow. The species grows best in nutrient-rich, moist and airy types of soil. Winter floods are not a problem, but this cannot happen during the growth season. It does not tolerate wind well at all. *Populus trichocarpa* is sometimes planted in forests for its log production and as a curiosity in sheltered locations in parks.

### TYPES OF PLANTING

**Tree types:** standard trees, multi-stemmed trees, woodland planting stock

### USE

**Location:** park, large garden, countryside | **Pavement:** none | **Planting concepts:** Landscape planting

### CHARACTERISTICS

**Crown shape:** rounded, wide oval | **Crown structure:** semi-open | **Height:** 25 - 30 m | **Width:** 10 - 15 m | **Winter hardiness zone:** 5A - 8B

### ASPECTS

**Wind:** intolerant to wind | **Soil:** loess, sabulous clay, heavy clay, light clay, sand, loamy soil | **Nutrient level:** rich in nutrients | **Soil moisture level:** moist, wet | **Light requirements:** sun | **pH range:** acidic, neutral | **Extreme environments:** tolerant to short-term flooding

### PLANTKENMERKEN

**Flowers:** catkins, discrete, pendulous | **Flower colour:** red, green | **Flowering period:** March - March | **Leaf colour:** dark green, buds bright green, underside white-grey | **Leaves:** deciduous, ovate, deltoid, big, leathery, scented, serrate | **Autumn colour:** yellow | **Fruits:** striking, rich fruit yield, pappuses, capsules | **Fruit colour:** white | **Bark colour:** yellow-green, grey-green | **Bark:** peeling, smooth, later on rough | **Twig colour:** grey-green | **Twigs:** bare, with lenticels, pendulous, long shoots | **Root system:** shallow, extensive, highly branched, root suckers, roots push up surface

