

TULIPTREE

Liriodendron tulipifera

Tuliptree has several common names, such as tulip poplar and white poplar. Foresters and lumbermen call it yellow poplar, even though it is not in the poplar genus at all. Tuliptree is the king of the Magnolia family, the tallest hardwood tree in North America. Tulip poplar develops into a magnificent large tall straight tree with heights up to 140 feet. The 6" leaves are tulip shaped and are generally four lobed and blunt or squared off across the top. The leaves turn bright yellow in autumn. The buds are uniquely shaped like a "duck's bill". The bud shape aids in identification during the winter months. The flowers are large showy greenish-yellow tulip-like flowers which bloom in May or June. They are 2-1½" long, with nine tepals, three green, reflexed, and six pale green banded orange near the base. The winged seeds develop on a cone-like structure, and as they ripen, they are dispersed by the wind. One individual seed looks like a miniature ski of a snowmobile. Tuliptrees grow rapidly and are an important timber and shade tree. The bark is gray brown and furrowed with age. At maturity, it has distinct chiseled ridges with paler furrows. The wood is valuable for veneer and many other uses. In colonial times, pioneers hollowed out a single log from a massive Tuliptree to make canoes. The American Indians made tea from the bark to treat upset stomach, rheumatism and fever.

There is only one Tuliptree at Baber Cemetery. It is located inside the main entrance on the east side of Baber Ave., in the Donaldson family plot. At one time, it competed for space and sunlight with a sick European Copper Beech tree which was removed in 2012 and was directly in front of the Tuliptree. The crowding by the Copper Beech gives the Tuliptree, now that it is standing alone, the appearance of being thinner in leaf volume on the side facing Baber Ave. The Tuliptree loses its leaves earlier in the fall than the neighboring Japanese Maple, the White Oak, and the Norway Maples.

