Instantly recognizable for its bark that separates into long, shreddy scales, the shagbark hickory is a Midwest native that can grow to be one hundred feet tall. This member of the walnut family can be found in woodlands and savannas from Minnesota eastward. Throughout the winter, its twigs carry large buds covered in a fine hair, and these start to flower in April and May.

Hickories are monoecious, meaning they produce both male and female flowers on the same tree. Throughout the spring, one can spot the dangling strands of greenish yellow catkins among the bunches of long, ovular leaflets. Its compound leaves feature groupings of five to seven leaflets with serrated edges. Because it grows almost fifty feet wide, the shagbark hickory provides excellent shade throughout the summer months.

In the fall, the leaves turn a light golden brown. Around the same time, hickory nuts ripen deep inside the trees' multi-husk fruit. These nuts are completely edible - they are often considered the pecan of colder climates. Throughout its range, the nuts are an important source of food to foxes, mice, chipmunks, squirrels, rabbits, birds, and black bears.

While the shagbark hickory has the makings of a good street tree with its tolerance of drought, flooding and salt spray, it has a deep taproot that makes it difficult to transfer, so it is not commonly used in plantings. In well-drained soil and with plenty of sun, the shagbark hickory can live to be three hundred years old.

For more information on this species, please contact trees@openlands.org.