

English walnut

(Juglans regia)

English walnut (also called “Persian” or “common” walnut), is a large, deciduous tree attaining heights of 40 to 60 feet tall with a 40 to 60-foot spread. Bark is smooth and olive-brown when young, and silvery-grey on older branches. The leaf is comprised of five to nine leaflets, each reaching a length of two to five inches. Leaves are compound and arranged alternately along the stem.

Mature trees may reach 50 feet in height and width and live more than 200 years, developing massive trunks more than eight feet thick.

Originally English walnut was native to the mountain ranges of Central Asia, extending from western China and the mountains of Nepal, Tibet, northern India and Pakistan through Afghanistan to portions of eastern Turkey. Cultivated distribution now includes North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Japan.

Fairly pest and disease-resistant, English walnut trees bear fruit as early as five to six years after planting. They do not do well in wet areas, but will grow on hillsides or flat ground in



Photo courtesy wikimedia.org

English walnut leaves above, and bark, right.

rich, deep soil with full sun. Soil must permit rooting to a depth of at least three feet.

Other plants will often not grow under them because their fallen leaves and husk contain juglone, a chemical that acts as a natural herbicide. For the colder winter climates east of the Cascades, planting the cold hardy Carpathian varieties such as Idaho, Somers, Ambassador or Champion is recommended.

Thanks to their heart-healthy compounds and antioxidants, walnuts are said to aid in heart protection as well as cancer prevention. Walnut wood is prized by woodworkers for its durability and luster, and is used for guitars, furniture, knobs and handles, and high-end flooring.

