

Edible Black Locust

by Creek Stewart

The cascading racemes of white flowers are what wild edible foragers seek. The wood, however, is a favorite for fence posts. My uncle was a logger in Kentucky and got his start by harvesting and selling Black Locust fence posts.

The leaves are compound (multiple leaflets) and odd-pinnate (odd number of leaflets). The edible flowers bloom for just a couple of weeks in early to mid-spring. If you think you see these flowers in summer, it is a different tree.

The flowers can be eaten raw or simmered in soups and stews. However, it is my opinion that they make the best flower fritters on the planet. The flavor resembles their fragrant smell and they are absolutely fantastic when dipped into your favorite gluten-free waffle mix and fried in a little bit of coconut oil. Is it spring yet????!! The leaves, pods, and bark should all be avoided. It is only the flowers and their immediate connected stems that should be used. The flowers can be eaten open or closed. Typically, a cluster of flowers has some of both. In fact, the flower stem makes the perfect handle for dipping the flower into runny batter.

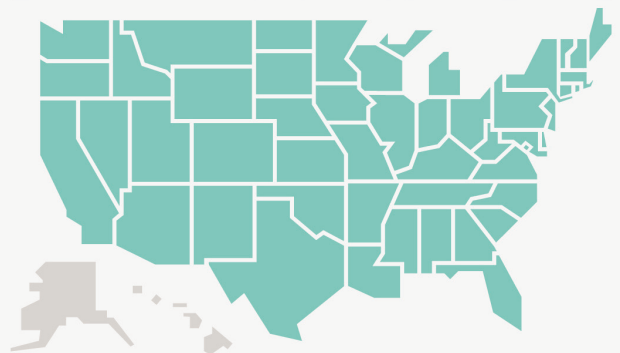
Though native to the Eastern United States, Black Locust is a widespread landscaping tree and can now be found all throughout the United States. There are many close relatives, such as Southwest's New Mexican Locust (*Robinia neomexicana*), that have nearly the exact same Unique Identifying Features. I have never eaten the flowers from any other Locust

tree. I never recommend that others eat plants that I have not personally eaten.

To me, the flower clusters look like white grapes from a distance. Up close, the unopened flowers look like little ballet slippers. This shape is common among flowers in the pea family. Black Locust should not be confused with Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), which is adorned with much longer (up to 10") spikey clusters of thorns.

Name:	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>
Common Name(s):	False Acacia
Family:	Fabaceae (legume family)
Native:	North America

UNITED STATES DISTRIBUTION MAP



(adapted from data available at <https://plants.usda.gov>)

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