

## ***Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Frisia'** **'Frisia' Black Locust<sup>1</sup>**

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson<sup>2</sup>

### **INTRODUCTION**

A fast-growing cultivar of the native deciduous locust, 'Frisia' Black Locust is probably capable of reaching 30 to 50 feet tall with a spread of 30 to 40 feet (Fig. 1). The upright growth and short, irregular branches cast light shade below the tree, allowing a lawn to thrive. The 6 to 14-inch-long, dull, yellow leaves, made up of multiple leaflets, are some of the last to appear in spring and often drop early in the autumn, just barely fading to a sickly yellow/green before dropping. The yellow foliage lasts only for a short period in the spring in the south. For approximately a 10-day period in late spring, the trees are festooned with four to eight-inch-long, dense clusters of extremely fragrant, one-inch white blossoms (similar to sweet-peas) which are literally "alive" with the bustling activity of visiting bees. The honey which is produced is quite delicious and sought-after. The two to four-inch-long, dark red to black, leathery seeds pods which follow will persist on the trees throughout the winter.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** *Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Frisia'

**Pronunciation:** roe-BIN-nee-uh  
soo-doe-uh-KAY-shuh

**Common name(s):** 'Frisia' Black Locust, 'Frisia'  
Common Locust

**Family:** *Leguminosae*

**USDA hardiness zones:** 4 through 8 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** native to North America

**Uses:** reclamation plant; shade tree; specimen; no  
proven urban tolerance

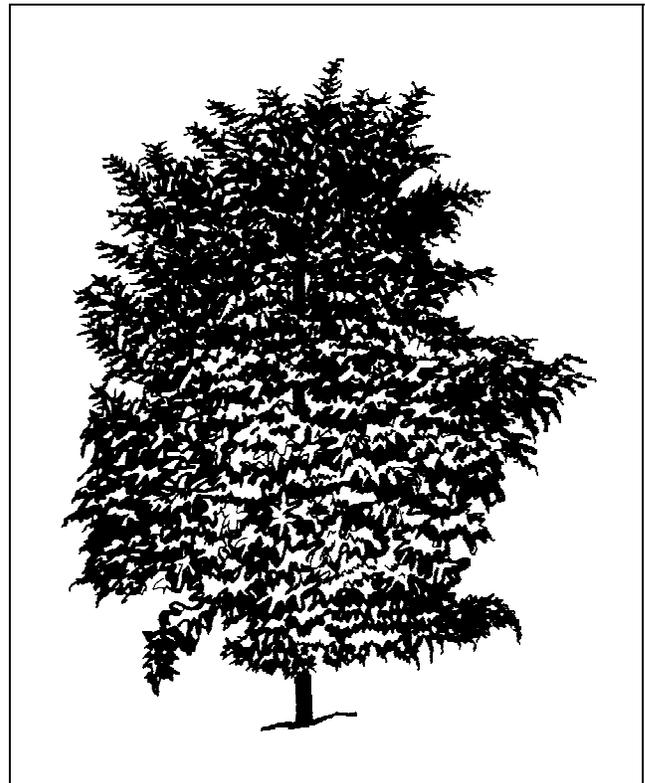


Figure 1. Middle-aged 'Frisia' Black Locust.

**Availability:** somewhat available, may have to go out  
of the region to find the tree

### **DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 30 to 50 feet

**Spread:** 30 to 40 feet

**Crown uniformity:** irregular outline or silhouette

**Crown shape:** oval; upright

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-571, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: October 1994.
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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Crown density:** open

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** fine

### Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate (Fig. 3)

**Leaf type:** odd pinnately compound

**Leaflet margin:** entire

**Leaflet shape:** elliptic (oval); oblong; obovate

**Leaflet venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaflet blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** yellow

**Fall color:** yellow

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

### Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristics:** pleasant fragrance; showy; spring flowering

### Fruit

**Fruit shape:** pod

**Fruit length:** 3 to 6 inches; 1 to 3 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** black; red

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; attracts squirrels and other mammals; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter; persistent on the tree

### Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; thorns are present on the trunk or branches

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** susceptible to breakage either at the crotch due to poor collar formation, or the wood itself is weak and tends to break

**Current year twig color:** brown

**Current year twig thickness:** thin

**Wood specific gravity:** 0.69

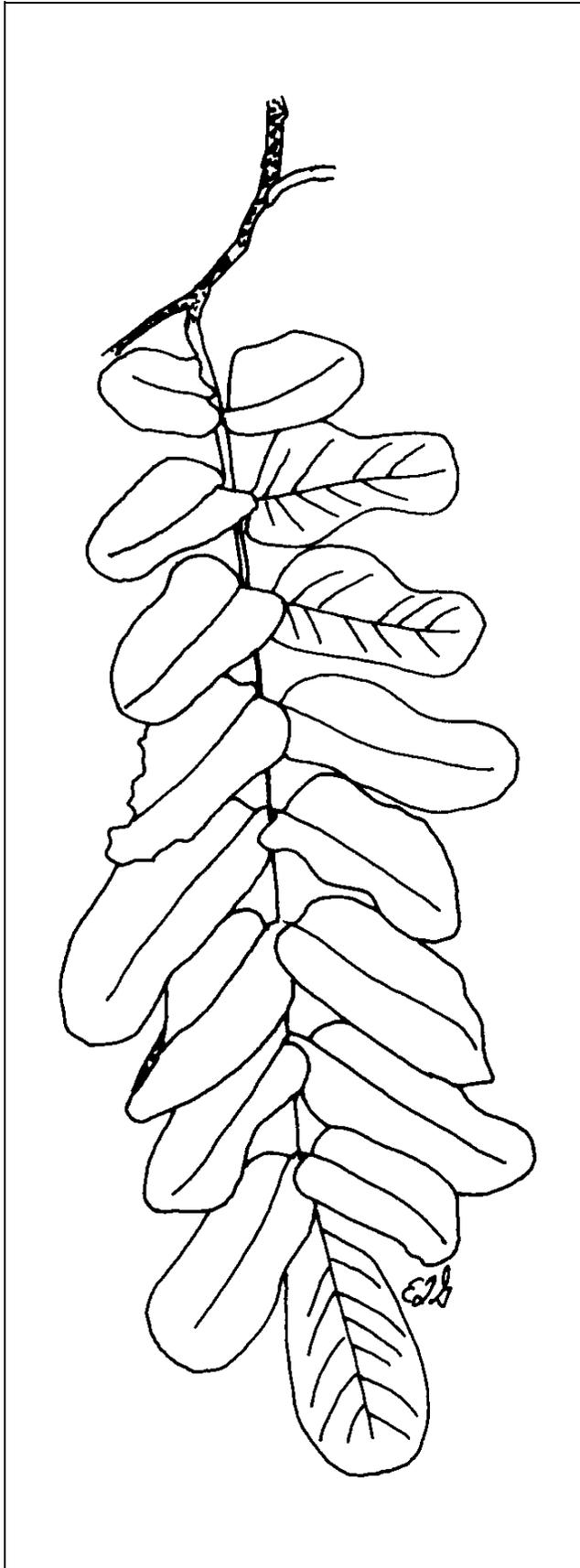


Figure 3. Foliage of 'Frisia' Black Locust.

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun;  
tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline;  
well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** high

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** high

#### Other

**Roots:** surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere  
with mowing

**Winter interest:** tree has winter interest due to  
unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter  
trunk, or winter flowers

**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding

**Invasive potential:** seeds itself into the landscape

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible

**Pest resistance:** very sensitive to one or more pests  
or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

### USE AND MANAGEMENT

These seeds are widely dispersed by birds and other wildlife, and along with the root suckering, invasive root system, Black Locust can spread into surrounding landscapes. This feature, along with the thorns found along the branches, should be considered when placing Black Locust in the ornamental garden. It is probably best saved for the reclamation project or roadside planting where trees receive no maintenance. If left to its own devices, Black Locust will form dense thickets, even on the poorest soils, a fact which makes it quite useful in reclamation applications, or along roadsides.

Although the wood of Black Locust is reputed to be extremely strong and durable (pioneers used it to fashion nails for building ships and houses), the branches are brittle and subject to damage in high winds. This may be due largely to the tendency for the branches to form a narrow angle with the trunk and to grow aggressively relative to the trunk forming embedded bark. This can be partially corrected by pruning the major branches so they grow to no more than about half the size of the trunk.

Able to tolerate drought, salt, and poor soil, Black Locust will grow in full sun or partial shade on almost any soil except that which is permanently wet. A tough tree which should be saved for the toughest sites. Not for general use in urban areas due to borer problems unless located on a moist, well-drained site with plenty of soil space.

#### Culture

## **Pests**

Locust borer is a serious pest although borer-resistant clones are now being developed. Also bothered by carpenterworm, locust leaf miner, and scales. Leaf miner is a universal problem on the species. Trees along the highways in the south can be seen in summer riddled with damage from this pest.

## **Diseases**

This tree is susceptible to canker, leaf spot, and powdery mildew.