

*Nyssa aquatica*

[Synonyms : *Bumelia denticulata*, *Nyssa angulisans*, *Nyssa candicans* var. *grandidentata*, *Nyssa denticulata*, *Nyssa grandidentata*, *Nyssa palustris*, *Nyssa tomentosa*, *Nyssa uniflora*, *Streblina denticulata*]

**WATER TUPELO** is a deciduous tree. Native to south-eastern North America it has inconspicuous small green flowers and leaves that turn yellow through to scarlet in Autumn.

It is also known as Bastard cottonwood, Bay poplar, Big tupelo, Black gum, Bowl gum, Chickasawatchie whitewood, Chicasawichie whitewood, Cotton gum, Gray gum, Gum cottonwood, Hickory poplar, Ladle gum, Large-leaf white gum, Large tupelo, Large water tupelo, Ogeechee lime, Olivetree, Pawpaw gum, Rootwood tupelo, Sap gum, Sour sum, Swamp black gum, Swamp gum, Swamp poplar, Swamp tupelo, Trade tupelo, Tupelo gum, Water gum, White gum, Wild olive, and Yellow gum.

The tree will tolerate flooding to a height of 6 ft. or more in swamps.

The flowers are pollinated by bees, and the seeds are dispersed by water.

*Aquatica* means 'growing in or near water'.

The dark blue berries are sold locally particularly for making preserves and the light amber honey is understood to have a unique and delicious taste. Known as Tupelo honey it is produced commercially and is said to be highly prized throughout the United States – not least because of the inordinate time it will take to crystallise.

Berries are also a popular food with birds and mammals, and the trees can offer valuable shelter for fish and small birds.

The burnt bark can be used as an ingredient for a red dye. (The North American Indian Choctaw tribe combined the burnt bark with ash from a particular oak tree to obtain the dye.)

Wood from the roots has provided an alternative material for cork as floats on fishing nets, as well as for container corks (stoppers). The tree's soft, tough and lightweight, off-white wood has been employed for a wide range of uses from veneering, plywood and pulp to material for making furniture, boxes, fruit crates, broom handles, hatters' blocks – and wooden shoes. (The latter were made particularly by many of the negro slaves in the North American South.)