



POPULUS

1. General

Populus is a difficult genus, partly due to the number of forestry clones planted in the *P. canadensis* aggregate. The BSBI *Willows and Poplars Handbook* is fine for identification of *P. alba*, *P. × canescens*, *P. tremula*, *P. trichocarpa* and *P. balsamifera*, but the *P. × canadensis* agg. and other taxa are summarised in the more up-to-date account in Stace's *New Flora*. Jobling (1990) may also be useful. Due to the interest in the native black poplar, the account below may help to distinguish trees from the plethora of similar taxa.

Trees can be sexed from autumn onwards by dissecting catkin buds.

Reference Jobling, J. (1990). *Poplars for wood production and amenity*. Forestry Commission Bulletin 92. HMSO, London.

2. *Populus nigra* subsp. *betulifolia*

The black poplar is widely distributed in low numbers in lowland England, Wales and Ireland, but is rare in Scotland. Recorders should note population sizes and sex if possible. The Table below summarises the main characters to distinguish it from other *Populus* taxa:

	<i>P. nigra</i> L. subsp. <i>betulifolia</i> (Pursh) Doppel	Other <i>Populus</i> taxa
Trunk and bark	Dark grey fissured bark, usually with prominent burrs on trunk and lower branches; mature trees often leaning	Bosses absent; bark variable, may be silvery
Crown	Spreading, usually with heavy, arching branches, upswept at tips	Columnar to spreading.; upswept tips to branches do not occur
Young leaves and twigs	Sparsely to densely pubescent at least when young	Leaves of hybrid black poplars glabrous at all stages but petioles and twigs may be puberulent; other <i>Populus</i> species may be hairy
Leaf shape	Variable, depending on vigour: normally broadly cuneate but may range from deltoid to angular-ovate; leaves longer than they are wide; margins serrate, the teeth not hooked	Variable, but leaves of hybrid black poplars normally wider than they are long; leaf margins of hybrid black poplars generally with hooked teeth

Plant Crib

- References* Hobson, D. D. (1991). *Watsonia* **18**: 303-305.
Hobson, D. D. (1993). *Irish Naturalists' Journal* **25**: 244-247.
Milne-Redhead, E. (1990). *Watsonia* **18**: 1-5.

Author D. D. Hobson, December 1997.