

## THE BALSAM POPLAR.

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The Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera*, Linn.), is found growing commonly throughout the Northern United States and Canada, but it reaches its greatest development in the north, especially along the Mackenzie River and its tributaries, where it often reaches a height of one hundred feet and more, with a diameter of six or seven feet. Professor Macoun states that this tree in habit differs very much from the aspen, but in its range it extends even farther north, and instead of being of little value, as the aspen is, it attains a great size and height as far north as the Arctic Circle on the Mackenzie River. West of Manitoba and northward it is usually found growing on alluvium in the river valleys, and in such situations it is often nearly 150 feet high and frequently over 7 feet in diameter. On the Peace River and all streams which unite to form the Mackenzie, it occupies all the islands and low alluvial banks. During the period of flood many trees fall into the rivers by the wearing away of the banks, and a great number of them in the course of time reach the Arctic Ocean. These are eventually cast on the islands and shores and become the chief source from which is derived the fuel supply of arctic travellers. The same may be said of the Yukon Valley, as it is this tree that occupies the valley and islands of that river on all newly formed lands, but in time gives place to spruce as the subsoil becomes cold and moist from the density of the poplar and willow growth. The Riviere aux Liards or Liard River (often erroneously called Laird River), a tributary of the Mackenzie, is named from this tree.

The leaves differ from those of the poplars previously mentioned, by being narrower in proportion to their length. They are ovate-lanceolate, acute or acuminate, dark green and lustrous on the upper surface, pale and often ferruginous on the lower. The usually broadened base is rounded or cordate. The color of the bark is chestnut brown. The aments or catkins appear in early spring, before the leaves, and the seeds are distributed about the end of May or early in June, covering the ground with their snow-white cottony envelope. The wood is light, soft and close-grained, but is not strong. The heart wood is light brown and the sapwood white. Its specific gravity is 0.3635, a cubic foot weighing 22.65 lbs. The leaf buds are saturated with a yellow, balsamic, sticky exudation, which gives the tree its specific name.