

White Poplar

(*Populus alba*)

White poplar has been documented in every US state with the exception of Alaska, Hawaii and Arizona; however, several other members of the genus *Populus* can be found in Arizona and Alaska, with considerable cross-reactivity expected. Aspen trees are also members of the *Populus* genus with the same extensive cross-reactivity. Strong cross-reactivity has also been confirmed with the Willows, a close relative to Poplar. White Poplar can grow to 100 feet tall, and 40 feet wide. White Poplar is a fast-growing tree, reaching a height of 15 – 17 feet within 5 years. In many areas White Poplar actually is designated as an invasive species, and can produce numerous root sprouts. There are many hybrids of Poplar throughout the US, but these hybrids are almost impossible to differentiate from each other short of molecular testing. Again, the cross-reactivity amongst all members of the *Populus* genus is very strong and expected.

White Poplar pollinates in the early spring, and its pollen is considered a moderate allergen. The “flowers” are actually a long, thin catkin (see right picture, above) that appear before the leaves actually sprout. Late spring and early summer sees the white fluffy seeds appear and become airborne. Patients who experience allergy symptoms at this point in time wrongly assume it is the pollen seeds causing their problem where in reality this point in time corresponds to the presence of invisible grass pollen.

Allergy to *Populus* trees is very common – various studies in the US show from 10 – 24% of allergic patients demonstrate sensitivity to *Populus* tree pollen.

