

# *Pyrus communis*, Common Pear<sup>1</sup>

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## Family

Rosaceae, rose family

## Genus

The genus name *Pyrus* stems from the Latin word *pirus* meaning “pear tree.”

## Species

The species name *communis* is the Latin term for “common.”

## Common Name

### Common pear, Pear

The name “common pear” is a direct translation of the scientific name for this tree.

## Description

This deciduous tree is native to Europe and eastern Asia, and has been introduced throughout much of the eastern United States, from Maine to Florida, and as far west as Texas and Missouri. Common pear grows best in moist soils with at least partial sunlight, and can reach a height of up to 40 feet. Leaves are simple and alternate, although they appear to be clustered at the end of the branches, and measure 1½–4 inches long by 1–2 inches wide. The oval-shaped leaves are dark green and shiny on the topside and pale green on the underside. The tips of the leaves are



Figure 1. Common pear (*Pyrus communis*)

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sharply angled, and leaf margins, or the edges of the leaves, are serrated or toothed. The gray-brown bark of young trees is smooth and develops vertical, scaly ridges and channels that flake with maturity. The 1-inch-wide, white to whitish-pink flowers have five petals and are often confused with apple blossoms. In the fall, the 2½- to 4-inch-long, edible fruits ripen to a color ranging from green to brown.

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## Allergen

Pollen from this tree is considered to be slightly allergenic.

## Applications

### Commercial/Practical

Common pear is most often cultivated for its soft and sweet fruit. Additionally, the light-colored wood is used to make products such as cabinets, knife handles, pencils, and engravings.

### Horticultural

The showy flowers and manageable height of common pear makes it a favorable ornamental landscape tree. Some find the aromatic flowers and sweet edible fruits to be an additional plus; however, a pollinator specimen must be nearby in order for the female tree to produce fruit. Careful consideration should be taken when choosing a planting location, since the soft fruits can be messy if not harvested.

## References

Virginia Tech (2011). *Common Pear*. Retrieved from <http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/syllabus/factsheet.cfm?ID=369>.

USDA Plants Database (n.d.). *Pyrus communis* L., Common Pear. Retrieved from <http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=PYCO>.