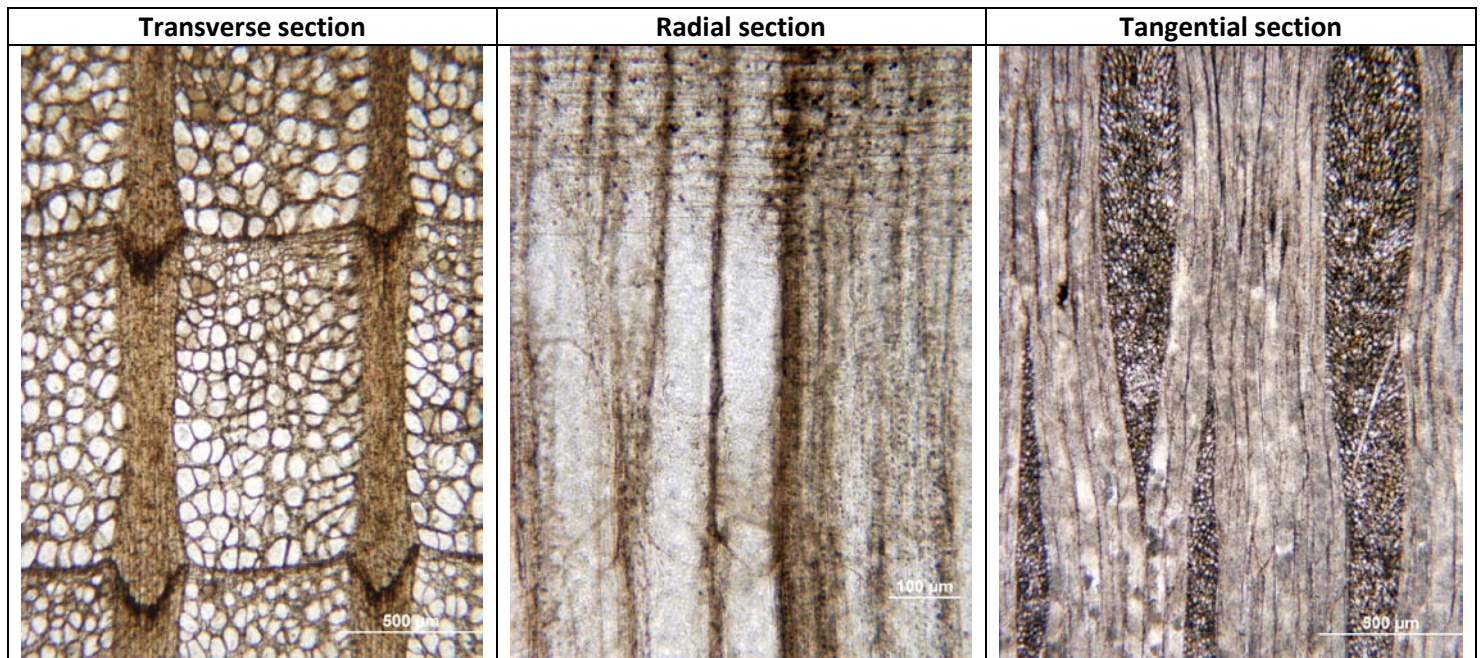


## ***Platanus americana (sycamore)***

Family: Platanaceae

Naming reference: Prakash, U. & Barhgoorn, E.S. 1961. Miocene fossil woods from the Columbia basalts of central Washington, I. Journal of the Arnold Arboretum, XLII, p. 165-199.

Other reference: Wheeler, E.A. & Dillhoff, T.A. 2009. The Middle Miocene wood flora of Vantage, Washington, USA. IAWA Journal, Supplement 7. 101p.



Photos courtesy Dr. E.A. Wheeler

**Diagnostic features:** Growth rings distinct, vessel arrangement diffuse porous with narrow vessels in the latewood zone. Vessels solitary and in small groups, some of which are arranged tangentially. Perforation plates mostly simple, some scalariform plates with 2-11 widely spaced bars in latewood vessel elements. Rays homocellular, to >15 cells wide, broad rays evenly spaced. Axial parenchyma diffuse, occasionally touching vessels.

**Discussion:** Sometimes confused for beech or oak, but easy to distinguish with a hand lens based on the diffuse porous vessel arrangement and large, evenly spaced rays. Beck (1945) listed *Platanus* as common at Squaw Creek and rare at Vantage. He did not list it as being present at other specific Columbia River Basalt localities, although the author has seen sycamore from the Umtanum Ridge area of Yakima Canyon and Dr. Kathleen Pigg of Arizona State University has reported a sycamore inflorescence from the Yakima Canyon 'bog' localities (personal communication). The best known find of sycamore wood from the Columbia River Basalts is the large hollow sycamore log found at Squaw Creek and reported by J.M. Smith (2000). Many specimens from this particular find are seen in public and private collections.

The sycamore family has a long fossil history in the northwest dating back to the Paleocene, just after the extinction of the dinosaurs. While the genus is no longer native in Washington State today, *Platanus racemosa* is a species native to California.