Pignut hickory usually has 5 leaflets per leaf (can have 7). They are dark yellowish green and smooth and the margins are serrate. Leaves are 1 foot in length.

Males flowers (left) are in drooping clusters (aments) of 3 from last year’s growth. Females (below) are in terminal spikes. Both male and female are on the same tree and appear in late April and May.

The terminal bud appears “naked” in the winter with no loose scales. It has a tan color and is smooth and about ½ inch long. Twigs are moderately stout, medium brown, and smooth with shield-shaped leaf scars.

Pignut fruit is usually pear-shaped and 1½ inches long. Its woody husk does not split away from the unridged nut. The kernel is bitter.

Pignut hickory mature bark is dark gray and very hard. It has narrow, flat, slightly shaggy ridges that often intertwine.