



Friends of SNOW CANYON

What's That Plant???

Utah's largest, most massive tree is Fremont Cottonwood. It was a welcome sight for southwestern explorers and travelers as it provided cooling shade and was an indicator that a water source was close by. Cottonwoods require some soil moisture and can be found growing in riparian areas near rivers, streams, springs and washes. Look for these plants along the Santa Clara and Virgin Rivers and in the washes below Johnson Canyon. It is also planted as an ornamental tree and lines the streets of many Southwestern towns.

Look For...

Foliage: Triangular or heart shaped leaves with toothed margins, similar to those of Aspen to which it is related. In late fall, they turn a bright yellow color.



Flowers: Dangling catkins (up to 6" long) appear in early spring on female plants.



Fruit: When mature, capsules release thousands of small seeds. They are covered with long, white hairs resembling cotton, hence the name Cottonwood. The seeds are dispersed by the wind and can literally cover the ground looking like snow, accumulating in piles several feet deep. The fuzzy seeds may irritate those with allergies.

Habit: This fast growing tree can reach up to 100 feet or more. The trunks often become gnarled and furrowed and can attain a diameter of five feet.



Fremont Cottonwood *Populus fremontii* Salicaceae — Willow Family



Native Americans used the wood for the framework of houses and to make baskets, tools and musical instruments such as drums. The cottony fibers in the seeds had medical applications.

Fremont Cottonwood provides an important habitat for many birds and provides shade for mammals. Raptors such as eagles and hawks use the tree for nesting and protection while hunting prey.

