ID CARD

False Acacia

(*Robinia pseudoacacia*)

Family name: Fabaceae (Legume family)
Common name: False Acacia, Black Locust, Robinia, Yellow Locust

False Acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) is a deciduous tree native to North America, valued for its timber and ornamental uses. In Ireland, it is considered invasive in some areas, particularly in disturbed woodlands and semi-natural habitats.

The tree reproduces through seeds and vegetatively via root suckers, making it difficult to control. Management strategies include mechanical removal, herbicide application, and avoiding planting near natural areas. Its ability to outcompete native vegetation and alter soil chemistry makes it a species of concern in non-native regions.

Description - False Acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) is a medium to large deciduous tree known for its pinnate leaves, fragrant flowers, and thorny branches. Originally native to North America, it has been introduced to many regions worldwide, where it is often used for ornamental purposes, timber, and erosion control. However, it can become invasive in some areas.

Key characteristics include:

Height: Typically grows between 12 and 30 metres, with some specimens reaching up to 40 metres in height.

Leaves: The leaves are pinnately compound, measuring 20-30 cm in length, with 7-19 oval leaflets that are 2-5 cm long. The leaves are bright green during the growing season and turn yellow in autumn.

Flowers: Produces pendulous clusters of fragrant, white to pale pink flowers, each 1.5-2.5 cm long, in late spring to early summer. The flowers attract bees and other pollinators.

Fruit: Forms flat, brown seed pods that are 5-10 cm long, containing multiple seeds. The pods ripen in late summer and persist on the tree through winter.

Stem: The stems and branches may have paired spines (thorns), especially on younger trees.

The bark is deeply furrowed and dark brown to grey, becoming rougher with age.

Root: The root system is deep and spreading, with the ability to form suckers and new shoots, allowing the tree to spread vegetatively. The roots also form nodules that fix nitrogen, improving soil fertility.

Habitat - False Acacia is native to the central and southeastern United States, but it has been widely introduced to other temperate regions. Its preferred habitats include:

- Woodlands and Forest Edges: Grows well in disturbed areas, woodland edges, and open forests.
- Urban and Rural Areas: Commonly found in parks, gardens, roadsides, and hedgerows, often used for ornamental planting or erosion control.
- Disturbed Sites and Slopes: Thrives in disturbed soils and is often planted on slopes and embankments to stabilise soil.

The tree prefers well-drained soils and full sun, although it can tolerate a variety of soil types, including poor, rocky, or sandy soils.

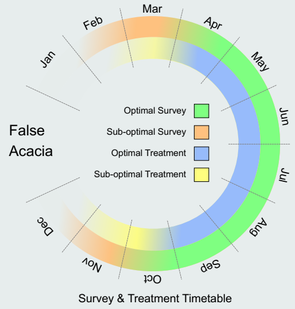
Status in Ireland - In Ireland, False Acacia is widely planted as an ornamental and for timber, but it is also considered invasive in some regions. It can spread aggressively in semi-natural habitats, particularly in disturbed woodlands and open areas, where it can outcompete native flora and alter habitat structure.

Reproduction and Spread - False Acacia reproduces through both seed production and vegetative propagation:

- Seed Dispersal: The seeds are dispersed by wind, water, and animals, often colonising disturbed areas or abandoned land.
- Vegetative Spread: The tree can spread vegetatively through root suckers, forming dense thickets that can be difficult to control.

Management and Control - Controlling False Acacia involves a combination of methods due to its ability to resprout:

- Mechanical Control: Cutting and digging out the roots can be effective for small infestations, but resprouting is common if roots are not completely removed. Repeated cutting may be necessary.
- Chemical Control: Herbicides can be used to treat cut stumps or regrowth, but repeated applications may be required to prevent resprouting.
- Preventative Measures: Avoid planting False Acacia near natural or semi-natural habitats to reduce the risk of escape.



Survey & Treatment Timetable

Ecological Impact - False Acacia can have several ecological impacts, particularly in non-native regions:

- Competition with Native Species: Forms dense thickets that outcompete native vegetation, reducing biodiversity.
- Alteration of Soil Chemistry: Its nitrogen-fixing ability can alter soil nutrient levels, favouring other invasive species over native plants.
- Impact on Pollinators: While the flowers attract pollinators, its dominance can reduce the diversity of available plant species, affecting overall ecosystem health.

For further information and free advice, please contact:
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