Black Poplar

Regno: flora
Riparian and marsh woods
populusnigra.jpg [1]

Black Poplar - *Populus nigra*

Typical riparian species, widespread in Italy both in the wild, along the banks of all sorts of running water, and in cultivations (it is the tree most used for wood in arboriculture).

The bark is rough and a blackish-brown colour. The triangular, tooth-edged leaves are shiny and glabrous and a beautiful bright green. The Black Poplar is dioecious and very exacting in its light requirements.

Male individuals are easy to recognise in flower by their short reddish catkins. Like other species of the genus, the fruits contain tiny, short-lived seeds provided with a conspicuous "pappus" i.e. a cottony appendage which helps disperse the seeds in the wind like a parachute. It grows faster than the White Poplar (at least when it is young) but is not so long-living and more subject to parasitic attack.

Practically none of the tree went unused in the past: as a pollard, its branches served as fodder and were used for wickerwork; in popular medicine the leaves were used as a febrifuge; the roots in cabinet making, whilst since ancient times the sawdust covered harvested crops to preserve them over winter.

Although the wood is by no means precious, it is still widely employed (in the paper industry, for packing and shelving, chipboard panels, matches etc.).

The most commonly used cultivars in Poplar stands are selected from Euro-american hybrids (*Populus nigra x deltoides*).

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Links:
[1] http://zoneumidetoscane.it/sites/default/files/populusnigra_0.jpg