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# BIOECOLOGICAL AND ENERGY POTENTIAL OF ROBINIA PSEUDOACACIA L. STANDS UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF THE VINNYTSIA FORESTRY DISTRICT OF SE "FORESTS OF UKRAINE"

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The scientific work presents the results of a comprehensive study of the productivity and ecological role of Robinia pseudoacacia L. plantations in Vinnytsia region. The relevance of the study stems from the widespread use of this species in agroforestry, energy forestry, and the reclamation of degraded lands, due to its high ecological plasticity, ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen, and rapid biomass growth. A review of the literature demonstrates the ambivalent impact of Robinia pseudoacacia L.: on the one hand, it improves soil fertility and increases nitrogen content; on the other hand, it poses a risk of displacing native plant species and disrupting the hydrological regime of the area. Fifteen temporary test plots with a total area of 5.25 hectares were established within the Vinnytsia Forestry Branch. Plot selection was carried out based on forest site conditions, stand age, species composition, site quality, and sanitary condition. The data collection methodology followed the national standard SOU 02.02-37-476:2006, ensuring the representativeness and reliability of the obtained data. The results of the study indicate the high biological productivity of Robinia pseudoacacia plantations within the Vinnytsia Forestry District. The predominant forest site conditions were fresh loams (type C2), which provided optimal conditions for the growth of this species. The age structure of the plantations is characterized by the dominance of young and middle-aged stands (over 56%), indicating active regeneration dynamics. Maturing, mature, and overmature stands accounted for a smaller proportion, reflecting effective forest management practices. The silvicultural and mensurational characteristics revealed significant variability in stand parameters depending on age. The average tree diameter ranged from 3.7 cm in 4-year-old stands to over 27 cm in 82-year-old stands, while tree height varied from 4.2 to 24.5 m. Absolute stand density ranged from 1.24 to 44.71 m<sup>2</sup>/ha, and relative density from 0.22 to 1.09, indicating different developmental stages and stand densities. Owing to the high wood density and calorific value, the stands exhibit considerable potential for biomass production as a source of renewable energy. The assessment of phytomass across different fractions of the aboveground tree components enabled an objective estimation of accumulated biomass per unit area and the calculation of potential energy yields. Structural analysis of sample plots by site quality classes revealed a predominance of medium-quality stands (classes I and III), characterized by an optimal balance between growth and ecosystem stability. This creates promising prospects for the further use of Robinia pseudoacacia L. in regional forestry practices as a key tool for bioenergy development and forest reclamation of degraded lands.

**Keywords:** energy efficiency, silvicultural and taxonomic indicators, type of forest vegetation conditions, productivity, biomass, phytomass.

## INTRODUCTION

Robinia pseudoacacia L., commonly known as black locust or "false acacia", is a fast-growing tree species widely utilized in forest reclamation, energy production, and land restoration projects. Its ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen, tolerance to drought, and adaptability to poor soils make it especially valuable for the rehabilitation of degraded lands [1].

However, the introduction of black locust may have negative ecological consequences. Studies conducted in Central Europe have demonstrated that it alters the understory structure and microclimate, promoting the spread of lightdemanding and nitrophilous species, which can lead to the displacement of native flora [2].

From an energy perspective, black locust demonstrates high potential. In short-rotation plantations on fertile soils, its yield can reach up to 45 t/ha of dry biomass within 5 years, surpassing the performance of some poplar hybrids. Additionally, *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. wood possesses high density and calorific value, making it an efficient energy source. Studies have also indicated the feasibility of using *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. sawdust to produce pellets with favorable fuel properties [4].

Robinia pseudoacacia L.'s high adaptability enables it to colonize former agricultural and mining lands, contributing to biomass accumulation and carbon sequestration. However, its invasive nature necessitates a cautious approach to its use, considering the potential impacts on local ecosystems and biodiversity [3; 5].

The aim of the study is to assess the ecological and energy potential of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. as an introduced tree species, taking into account its ability to reclaim degraded lands, fix atmospheric nitrogen, and productivity in short-rotation plantations, as well as to study possible risks to biodiversity and the functioning of local ecosystems in the context of the spread of this species.

# ANALYSIS OF LATEST RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Robinia pseudoacacia L. has been the subject of numerous studies evaluating its bioecological and energy potential. Due to its nitrogen-fixing capacity, rapid growth, and resistance to adverse conditions, this species is considered promising for the restoration of degraded lands, biomass production, and soil improvement [6]. A study by A. A. Dzyba found that the density and age of Robinia pseudoacacia L. plantations affect the vegetation composition and soil chemical properties in floodplain forests in Austria. With increasing density and age of plantations, the content of

nitrogen, nitrate, and carbon in the soil increases, promoting the spread of nitrophilous plant species. However, overall plant diversity does not change significantly, indicating the complex impact of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. on the ecosystem [2].

- S. A. Sytnyk investigated the potential of Robinia pseudoacacia L. for biomass production. She found that its rapid growth and strong regrowth ability after cutting make Robinia pseudoacacia L. a promising species for energy production [8].
- S. A. Sytnyk analyzed the biomass productivity of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. under two-year cultivation cycles. The results demonstrated that *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. can provide stable biomass yields with high energy potential, confirming its suitability for establishing short-rotation energy plantations [5; 8].

# MATERIALS AND RESEARCH METHODS

To investigate the biological productivity as well as the ecological and energy potential of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. plantations — specifically focusing on the above-ground phytomass of the trees — we conducted field research during 2024–2025. Temporary test plots were established within the territory of the Vinnytsia Forestry Branch to collect the necessary data and carry out the experiments.

According to the Ukrainian standard SOU 02.02-37-476, temporary sample plots (TSPs) used for forest research must meet the following requirements [7]:

- 1. Location: TSPs should be situated at least 30 meters away from forest boundaries, roads, clearings, logging sites, and other forest infrastructure;
- 2. Number of trees: Each plot must include no fewer than 200 trees of the main forest-forming species;
- 3. Area: The area of a TSP must be a multiple of 0.05 hectares, and its length-to-width ratio must not exceed 2:1 [2; 4].

To establish temporary sample plots, we selected forest areas within the territory of the Vinnytsia Forestry where artificially planted stands of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. are widespread.

Using the "Divisional Taxation Characteristics of Forests" database, taxonomic descriptions, and stand planning materials, we selected sample plots on the lands managed by the forestry enterprise, which operates under the State Enterprise "Forests of Ukraine".

When selecting plots, the following stand characteristics were taken into consideration: forest vegetation type, forest type, stand com-

position, stand age, quality class, and relative stocking (completeness).

The next stage involved an on-site inspection of the selected forest plots. During this process:

- the current silvicultural and taxonomic characteristics of the stands were verified;
- the compliance with the designated forest vegetation conditions was assessed;
- the sanitary condition of the stands was evaluated

If the *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. stands met the established criteria and were deemed representative, a temporary sample plot was established. The size of each TSP was determined based on the number of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. trees subject to measurement.

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the Vinnytsia Forestry District, where a sufficient number of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. plantations are present, 15 temporary sample plots were established (*Fig. 1*). On these plots, the main silvicultural and mensurational characteristics of the stands and the phytomass of individual fractions of the above-ground tree parts were determined. The total area of the plots amounted to 5.25 hectares.

The silvicultural and taxonomic characteristics of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. stands from sample plots are presented in *Table 1*.

According to S. A. Sytnyk when selecting the optimal method and number of model trees for accurately determining the phytomass of plantations, it is necessary to consider: the objectives of the study, the variability of key taxonomic indicators (such as age, quality class, and forest type), and the time and financial costs of fieldwork [5]. In other words, to effectively select model trees, it is necessary to balance the required accuracy of the study with available resources and the variability of forest characteristics. Based on our analysis of Robinia pseudoacacia L. plantations within forestry enterprises of the Vinnytsia Forestry Branch, these plantations are predominantly found in clumps. According to forest fund accounting data, clumps occupy more than half (54.3%) of the forested area, while thickets account for 38.1%. Pines are present only insignificantly, constituting 0.9%. To ensure the representativeness of the study, the temporary test plots we established reflected the typical structure of these stands (Table 2) [4].

Analysis of the distribution of temporary sample plots by predominant types of forest vegetation conditions (FVC) and quality classes indicates the predominance of medium-productive plantations, corresponding to quality classes I and III, with 6 and 5 plots respectively. The largest area is occupied by the type of conditions C2 (fresh clumps), which indicates sufficient pro-



Fig. 1. Black locust (Robinia pseudoacacia L.) plantations in the Vinnytsia Forestry District Source: photo by the authors.

Table 1
Silvicultural and taxonomic characteristics of Robinia pseudoacacia plantations
(Vinnytsia Forestry District)

m · 1	G. I		Avera	age	Number A	Absolute	D-1-4:		0 114
Trial plot code	Stand composition	Age, years	Diameter, cm	Height, m	of trees, pcs/ha	density, m²/ha	Relative density	TFI	Quality class
15021.1	10Rps.L.	21	12.6	17.5	288	15.49	0,66	C0	Ia
15022.2	10Rps.L.	63	22.4	23.3	312	38.00	1,09	B2	I
15023.7	7Rps.L3Psul. L.	13	5.8	6.7	431	4.47	0,35	A0	IV
15024.9	10Rps.L.	37	21.4	20.1	202	44.71	1,01	C2	Ia
15025.2	7Rps.L.3Psul. L.	4	3.7	4.2	418	1.24	0,22	B1	III
15026.1	10Rps.L.	54	21.8	21.5	303	25.87	0,83	B1	I
15027.8	7Rps.L.3Qrob.L.	82	27.8	24.5	252	25.84	0,89	C2	III
15028.4	9Rps.L.1Fex.L.	53	21.3	19.5	207	24.57	0,82	C1	II
15029.9	10Rps.L.	51	21.1	20.5	290	27.81	0,81	C0	I
15030.5	9Rps.L.1Psul. L.	31	15.2	18.2	382	4.91	0,22	B2	III
15031.6	10Rps.L.	62	22.6	20.4	229	24.76	0,88	B1	III
15032.9	10Rps.L.	71	24.1	22.1	208	28.54	0,73	B1	III
15033.10	10Rps.L.	43	19.6	13.4	271	39.65	0,82	C0	I
15034.15	10Rps.L.	12	6.3	6.7	229	37.87	0,88	C0	I
15035.17	10Rps.L.	15	6.6	5.3	259	27.87	0,78	C1	I

Source: formed on the basis of the authors' research.

 ${\it Table~2}$  Distribution of TSPs by predominant types of forest vegetation conditions and quality classes

Type of forest		Total				
Type of forest vegetation conditions	Ia	I	II	III	IV	Total
B2	_	1	_	1	1	3
B1	-	2	_	2	1	5
C1	_	1	_	_	_	1
C2	_	2	_	3	1	6
Total	1	6		5	3	15

Source: formed on the basis of the authors' research.

ductivity of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. plantations. Overall, the structure of the TTPs reflects the predominance of conditions with medium and sufficient productivity potential [9; 10].

The age structure of *Robinia pseudoaca-cia* L. plantations within the territory of the Vinnytsia Forestry Department is characterized by the predominance of young stands, which cover the largest area. The maximum age of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. in this region reaches 90 years, although stands of this age occupy the smallest area.

Temporary test plots were established taking into account this age structure. *Fig. 2* shows the distribution of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. stands by age group across the temporary test plots.

According to Fig. 2, under the studied conditions, young and middle-aged stands prevail, each group accounting for approximately 28–29%. This indicates active regeneration and good representation of young stands in the overall forest fund structure. Maturing and mature stands occupy about 21–22%, suggesting a gradual transition of stands into the maturity phase. Overature stands

have the smallest share — only about 8% — which may indicate timely final felling.

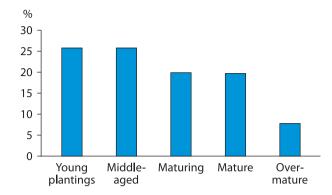
Table 3 presents a detailed distribution of temporary sample plots by age classes and quality [1; 7].

Analysis of the data from *Table 3* shows that the experimental stands are distributed quite evenly by age and correspond to the actual age structure.

According to the distribution of temporary test plots, most are located in young and middle-aged stands, which reflects the real age distribution of the stands managed by the Vinnytsia Forestry District.

In addition to the aforementioned characteristics of the studied stands, it is also important to evaluate the research data by relative stand density. The distribution of temporary trial plots by relative stand density and age groups is presented in *Table 4* [3].

Temporary test plots were established considering a range of relative completeness, with the most representative values between 0.7 and 0.9. Analysis of data from the Specific Taxation Characteristics of Forests database shows that the



**Fig. 2.** Distribution of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. plantations by age group in the Vinnytsia Forestry District

Source: formed on the basis of the authors' research.

relative completeness of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. stands within the territory of the Vinnytsia Forestry Branch varies widely, ranging from 0.2 to 1.0.

An important aspect of studying both the energy potential and ecological functions of any stand is the analysis of wood density dynamics [4].

 ${\it Table~3}$  Distribution of temporary sample plots by age class and creditworthiness

Credit rating	Age class										
	I	II	III	IV	v	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	Total
Ia			1	1	_	_	_	_		_	2
I	_	2	_	_	1	2	1	_	_	_	6
II	_	_	_	_	_	1	_	_	_	_	1
III	1	_	_	1	_	_	1	1	1	_	5
IV	_	1	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	1
Total	1	3	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	_	15

Source: formed on the basis of the authors' research.

 ${\it Table~4}$  Distribution of TSPs stands by age group and relative completeness

A	Relative completeness							
Age group	0.2-0.3	0.31-0.4	0.61-0.7	0.71-0.8	0.81-0.9	≥1.0	Total	
Young	1	1	_	1	1		4	
Middle-aged	1	_	1	_	1	1	4	
Maturing	_	_	_	_	3	_	3	
Mature	_	_	_	1	1	1	3	
Overmature	_	_	_	_	1	_	1	
Total	2	1	1	2	7	2	15	

Source: formed on the basis of the authors' research.

Table 5
Energy reserve in the phytomass of Robinia pseudoacacia L. stands in the Vinnytsia Forestry District (GJ/ha)

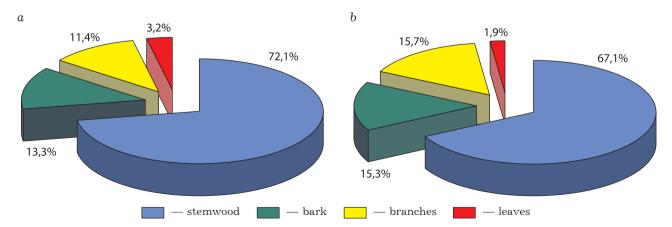
Average diameter, cm	Average height, m										
	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	
4	800										
6	750	1127									
8	732	1000	1280								
10	721	960	1233	1622							
12		935	1200	1577							
14		896	1167	1454	1780						
16			1112	1432	1721	2019					
18			1002	1411	1650	1987	2461				
20				1321	1612	1912	2333	2829			
22					1546	1892	2200	2698	2900		
24						1768	2102	2578	2868	3274	
26							2050	2365	2645	3139	
28									2428	3090	

Source: formed on the basis of the authors' research.

In this context, the energy value of Robinia pseudoacacia L. stands in the Vinnytsia Forestry Branch was estimated by determining the amount of energy stored in their aboveground phytomass. Additionally, literature data were used, indicating that, on average, one ton of carbon in phytomass contains 35.76 GJ of energy [3].

Data on the energy content of the aboveground phytomass of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. stands per hectare, depending on their average diameter and height at a relative completeness of 0.9, are presented in *Table 5*.

According to the research results, the highest reserve values are observed at the largest sizes — 3090 GJ at a diameter of 28 cm and a height of 24 m. The growth of the energy reserve occurs unevenly, with a tendency to accelerate, which indicates a high bioenergy potential of the breed. The data confirm the effectiveness of us-



**Fig. 3.** Average energy potential of the structural components of above-ground phytomass in *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. stands:

a — diameter (D) — 20 cm, height (H) — 18 m; b — diameter (D) — 10 cm, height (H) — 12 m. Source: formed on the basis of the authors' research.

ing white acacia as a productive energy crop in the study conditions.

The size and density of *Robinia pseudoaca-* cia L. stands significantly influence energy accumulation. As tree size increases, energy content rises in the trunks but decreases in the crowns. Denser stands store more energy overall. According to analytical data, *Robinia pseudoaca-* cia L. forests in the Vinnytsia Forestry territory have the potential to accumulate up to 2 million GJ of energy annually.

We also estimated the distribution of structural fractions within the above-ground phytomass of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. stands by calculating their relative proportions (*Fig. 3*).

A comparative analysis presented in Fig. 3 shows that in both cases, the largest share of the above-ground phytomass is accounted for by trunk wood. However, in variant (b), its relative proportion decreases by approximately 5%, while the shares of bark and branches increase. The smallest share in both variants belongs to leaves, with an additional decrease observed in variant (b). These changes likely reflect the influence of specific ecological and biological factors on the stands, as well as differences in their age groups.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study confirmed the high productivity of *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. plantations in the

Vinnytsia Forest District, particularly under fresh clump conditions (site type C2). Average tree diameters ranged from 3.7 cm in young stands to 27.8 cm in mature ones, with heights varying from 4.2 to 24.5 m, indicating rapid growth and strong adaptability to local environmental conditions.

Robinia pseudoacacia L. exhibits high energy potential due to its dense and high-calorific wood. For instance, the energy reserve in the phytomass reaches 3090 GJ/ha for trees with a diameter of 28 cm and a height of 24 m, making the species a promising candidate for bioenergy production and renewable energy resource development.

The predominant forest vegetation condition is fresh clumps (C2), where *Robinia pseudoacacia* L. demonstrates optimal growth performance. The age structure of the stands is dominated by young and middle-aged trees, indicating active regeneration and contributing to ecosystem stability.

Robinia pseudoacacia L. plantations, particularly those of medium site quality (classes I and III), serve as an effective tool for bioenergy production, forest reclamation, and the stabilization of degraded lands.

However, their utilization requires careful planning, including consideration of environmental impacts and continuous monitoring of biodiversity effects.

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# БІОЕКОЛОГІЧНИЙ ТА ЕНЕРГЕТИЧНИЙ ПОТЕНЦІАЛ ДЕРЕВОСТАНІВ *ROBINIA PSEUDOACACIA* L. В УМОВАХ ВІННИЦЬКОГО НАДЛІСНИЦТВА ДП "ЛІСИ УКРАЇНИ"

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У науковій праці висвітлено результати комплексного дослідження продуктивності та екологічної ролі насаджень робінії псевдоакації на території Вінниччини. Актуальність роботи зумовлена широким використанням цього виду в агролісомеліорації, енергетичному лісівництві та рекультивації деградованих земель завдяки його високій екологічній пластичності, здатності до фіксації атмосферного азоту та швидкому приросту біомаси. Аналіз літературних джерел демонструє амбівалентність впливу робінії: з одного боку — покращення родючості ґрунту та підвищення вмісту азоту, з іншого ризик витіснення аборигенних видів рослин і порушення гідрологічного режиму територій. На базі філії "Вінницьке лісове господарство" було закладено 15 тимчасових пробних площ загальною площею 5,25 га. Відбір ділянок здійснювався з урахуванням типу лісорослинних умов, віку деревостанів, складу насаджень, бонітету та санітарного стану. Методика обліку базувалася на державних стандартах СОУ 02.02-37-476:2006, що забезпечило репрезентативність даних. Результати дослідження свідчать про високу біологічну продуктивність робінієвих насаджень у межах Вінницького надлісництва. Переважаючими типами лісорослинних умов були свіжі сугруди (тип С2), що забезпечували найкращі умови для росту цієї породи. Вікова структура насаджень характеризується домінуванням молодняків і середньовікових деревостанів (понад 56%), що свідчить про активну динаміку відновлення. Пристигаючі, стиглі та перестійні насадження становили меншу частку, що вказує на ефективне лісогосподарське управління. Лісівничо-таксаційна характеристика показала значну варіативність таксаційних показників залежно від віку деревостанів. Середній діаметр дерев коливався від 3,7 см у 4-річних насадженнях до понад 27 см у 82-річних, а висота — від 4,2 до 24,5 м. Абсолютна повнота варіювалася від  $1,24~{\rm M}^2/{\rm ra}$ до  $44,71~\text{м}^2/\text{га}$ , відносна повнота — від 0,22~до 1,09, що свідчить про різні стадії розвитку та густоту насаджень. Завдяки високій шільності та калорійності деревини, насадження демонструють значний потенціал для виробництва біомаси як джерела відновлюваної енергії. Дослідження фітомаси окремих фракцій надземної частини дерев дали змогу об'єктивно оцінити кількість акумульованої біомаси на одиницю площі та розрахувати можливі обсяги енергетичних ресурсів. Структурний аналіз пробних площ за класами бонітету засвідчив переважання середньобонітетних насаджень (І та III класи), що характеризуються оптимальним співвідношенням приросту та стабільності екосистеми. Це відкриває перспективи для подальшого використання робінії в лісогосподарській практиці регіону як одного з основних інструментів біоенергетичного розвитку та лісомеліорації деградованих територій.

**Ключові слова:** енергоефективність, лісівничо-таксаційні показники, тип лісорослинних умов, продуктивність, біомаса, фітомаса.

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