




Bellemeade Park

THE TREES IN OUR FOREST

Our forest at Oak Grove Bellemeade is full of native trees! You might ask, ***What it is that makes a tree a "Native" tree?***

Well, it's very similar to what makes an American a "Native" American. Whether you are a tree or you are an American, you are "Native" if your ancestors have lived here since their earliest days.

There are always special things to learn from natives. Natives tend to understand the environment, the weather, and how to live in a specific place on earth in very special and meaningful ways.

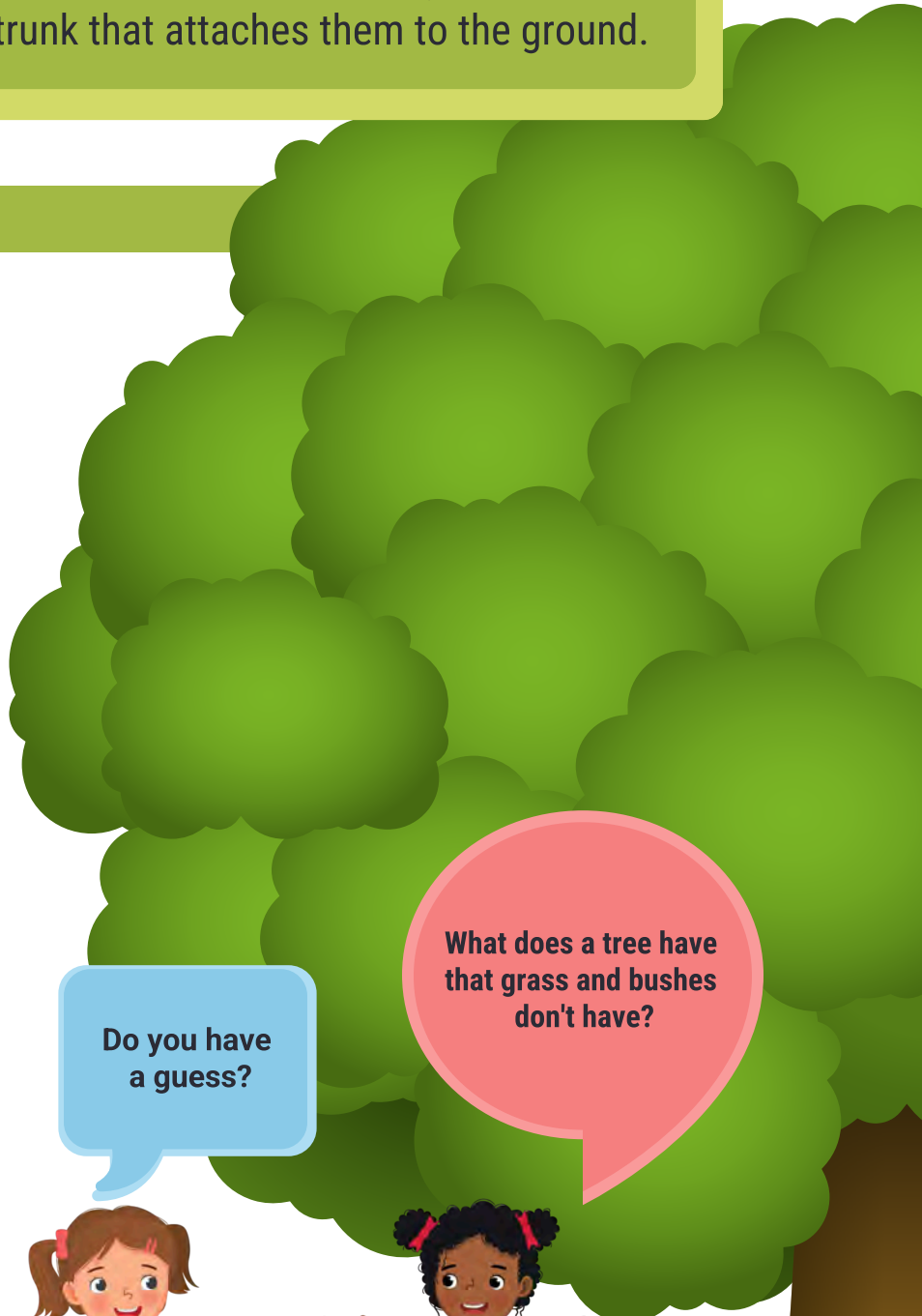
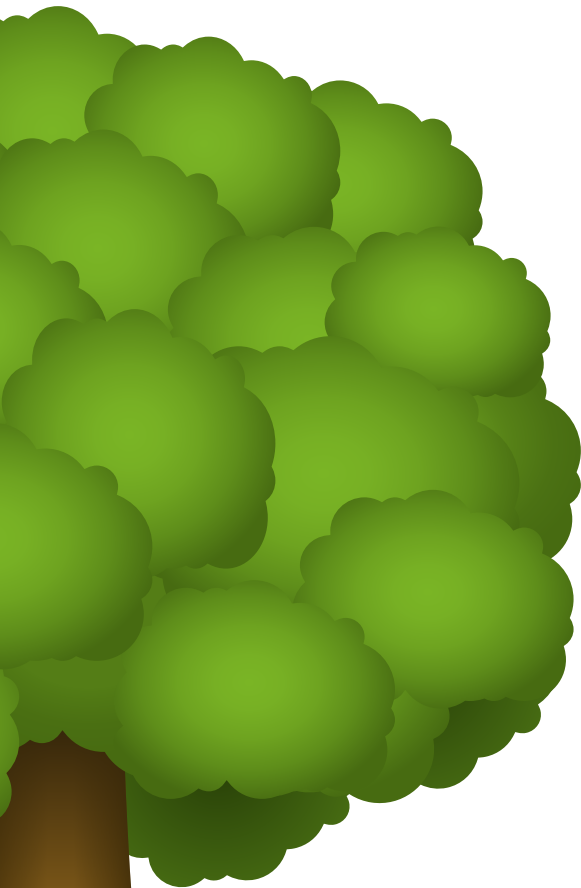


What makes a tree a "Native" tree?



I guess before we start meeting trees, we should understand, *What makes a tree a tree?*


Grass, bushes, and trees are all green things in the Plant Kingdom, but a tree has something others don't have. What is that? A trunk! Yes, all trees have a main trunk that attaches them to the ground.



Do you have a guess?

What does a tree have that grass and bushes don't have?





Trees have been living on Earth much longer than humans, and have accomplished amazing things.

Have you ever wondered...

What is the oldest tree on earth?

What is the tallest tree on earth?



WHAT IS THE OLDEST TREE ON EARTH?

5,000 YEARS OLD

Many people think the oldest tree on earth is a bristlecone pine tree here in America named "Methusela". Methusela is thought to be about 5000 years old! But there are other trees that might be even older.

WHAT IS THE TALLEST TREE ON EARTH?

380ft Tall

The tallest tree on Earth is thought to be a Redwood tree names Hyperion towering 380ft above the ground!



Here at the Oak Grove Bellemeade Arboretum, there are many hundreds of native trees, animals, reptiles and insects.

How about we have a talk with some of the native trees and see if we can get them to tell us more about themselves...



American Elm



Tell us a little bit about yourself American Elm tree.



I like to grow tall! 75-100 ft when I can, and I like to live in low places mostly. Like bottomlands, and fertile, moist soils. I was once one of the most popular city street and landscape trees, but I have been having a tough time with a disease called Dutch Elm Disease that makes it hard for me to grow big and tall anymore.

Q

How did you get your name?

Oh, elms like me have been a favorite tree of Americans for as long as I can remember. Even long before the white men came, we were the council trees for Indian tribes, and then later the meeting place for treaty-making between native americans and white men, and then we were the favorite house sites for early settlers. I guess that's why we are called the American Elm.

A

What do the animals like about you?

My seeds and flower buds are gobbled up by birds and small mammals. Its ok though. I make so many they could never eat them all!

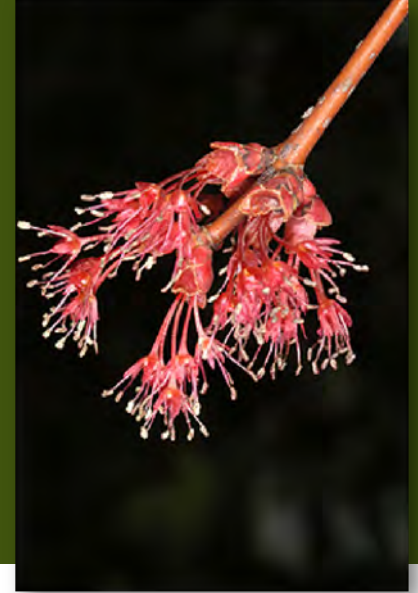
What do you think people like most about you?

My shape! I grow up and out like a giant fountain and then droop the ends of my limbs down. Some would say I am even "graceful."

What's a fun fact about you?

Well, I make lots and lots of leaves, and when I am full grown, if you spread out my leaves side by side they would cover a whole acre!

Red Maple



Tell us a little bit about yourself, Red Maple tree.



I love Red! I wear it almost all year. My buds, my flowers, my leaf stalks, and finally my red fall leaves. All Red! I can live almost anywhere, but I especially like shaded areas in the understory. Native Americans used to make an oil from my burned ashes to boil acorns in. Early pioneers made an ink from my bark. You can get sugar from my trunk, but not as much as from my cousin, the Sugar Maple.

Q

A

I guess we don't have to ask you why you are called "Red Maple?"

Ha ha! Nope. But I will tell you that I put my red in my flowers and buds so early in the spring, before the leaves are on the trees, that I am some of the first color you will see in the forest at the beginning of spring. That makes me really stand out, and is probably how I got my name.

What do the animals like about you?

My red fruits and buds are one of the main foods for grey squirrels in late winter and early spring. Birds and mice eat my seeds, and deer browse young maple sprouts.

What do you think people like most about you?

Do you really have to ask? Red! Since my wood isn't as strong as many other trees it is mostly just used for things like kitchenware, clothes hangers and clothespins. But I am still one of people's favorite trees to look at in the fall, and I give little kids lots of fluffy red leaves to play in.

What is a fun fact about you?

Well, I don't know if its fun, but I'm super scared of forest fires! My bark is thin and my wood is light so the last thing I want to see is a fire! Good news is, I can live almost anywhere, and tolerate the widest variety of soil conditions of any north American forest species.

Sweetgum



Tell us a little about yourself, Sweetgum tree. Can we chew you?

How did you guess! Yes, there was a time when people used my hardened sap as chewing gum, but now the stores are full of other tastier things to chew on. I like to grow in rich river bottoms, swamp edges, and drier uplands. I can grow pretty tall - 60-90ft.

Q

A

Well, I guess we already know how you got your name.

Yep. But people didn't chew my sap just because they liked to chew. My sap is known to be a medicine to help with all kinds of problems people have with the bellies and their skin.

What do the animals like most about you?

Small songbirds, chipmunks, and squirrels eat my seeds, and my twigs are browsed by mice and rabbits.

What do people like most about you?

Well, to tell you the truth, a lot of people have a problem with me. The little spiky balls that I put my seeds in fall off the tree and are not too easy to walk on. But people who don't mind the gumballs think I have the most beautiful, star-shaped leaves!

What is a fun fact about you?

I don't know what could be more fun than being used for chewing gum!

Silver Maple



Tell us a little about yourself, Silver Maple tree.

I like to grow on stream banks, floodplains, and lake edges. Since my leaves aren't as colorful as the other maples in the fall, I like to show off in other ways in the summer and winter.

Q

How did you get your name?

Well, that leads us to the showing off. The top of my leaves are green, but the underside is silver. When the wind blows through my canopy many leaves flip over and make me sparkle like silver. When my trunk is wet in the winter it also looks silvery.

A

What do the animals like most about you?

My seeds are the largest of any native maples, which makes them a healthy treat for many birds and small mammals. Squirrels feed heavily on me in late winter and beavers feed on my bark and cut stems.

What do people like most about you?

My wood isn't that strong, but I make up for in looks what I lack in strength. Many people would say I combine dignity and grace, and add a special atmosphere wherever I am planted.

What's a fun fact about you?

It is said that my sap is even tastier than that of Sugar Maple, but the amount of flow is much less, so most maple syrup is taken from my cousin Sugar.

Bald Cypress



Tell us something about yourself, Bald Cypress tree.

I love the water! I can even grow with my roots under water. I am one of the few trees with cones that also drops its needles in the winter. I will grow anywhere there is a lot of water nearby. Swamps, streambanks - the wetter the better.

Q

A

How did you get your name?

I guess it's because I sort of go "bald" in the winter compared to most other trees like me with needles and cones that stay green all winter long. Those others are known as "evergreen," but I am "deciduous" like the bigger leafed hardwood trees.

What do animals like most about you?

Since I like the water more than almost any other tree, any animal that likes the water also likes me. Bald eagles and ospreys like to build nests on my top, and cavity nesting birds use any of my dead wood. Catfish are known to spawn in my hollow, sunken logs.

What do people like most about you?

Since people like the water also, I think they like to see me when they go on trips to the water, and they like to see the big, pretty birds that call me their home.

Whats a fun fact about you?

I have knees! Or at least that's what you people call them. My roots produce cone-shaped structures that stick up above the ground or the water and if I'm in the water it makes it look like I have my own little island.

Black Gum



Tell us something about yourself, Black Gum tree.

I can grow almost anywhere, and I don't mind the shade. The Virginia understory is one of my favorite places to be, so usually I don't grow too tall.

Q

How did you get your name?

Well, that is a pretty good mystery. Nobody really knows, except that in the woods my bark looks a little like sweetgum bark but is darker. Also the skin just inside my bark is darker than sweetgum. Other than that, I am not much like a sweetgum tree at all, so who knows?

A

What do animals like most about you?

Many species of birds and wildlife eat my fruit, and bees use my nectar to make honey.

What do people like most about you?

My fall color is second to none, and I'm so eager to show off my bright red leaves I usually do it before any of the other trees start to change colors.

What's a fun fact about you?

In colonial days hollow sections of my trunks were used for "bee gums" or places for bees to make their hives.

White Oak



Tell us something about yourself, White Oak tree.

Some would say that if Oak trees are the kings of trees, then I am the king of the kings! Almost no native american tree grows as tall and wide as I do. I like higher, upland areas better than low, wet areas. My bark peels off in big flakes which sometimes makes people wonder if I'm OK!

Q

How did you get your name?

My wood is used for anything and everything, and it has a lighter color than the other oaks. It's not really white, but since it's so light colored people just call me White Oak.

A

What do animals like most about you?

My acorns! They are sweet, at least to animals, and are the preferred food of deer, bear, turkeys, squirrels, and other wildlife.

What do people like most about you?

For the native americans it was my acorns. They would boil them to make them sweeter, and make all kinds of healthy treats from them. Unfortunately, these days I guess it's my wood! It is strong, and used for anything that is built to last. It is also known to hold water well, so it's used for wine and beer caskets. If you don't need wood, though, people will tell you I make the most wonderful tree for a big yard.

What is a fun fact about you?

I was a favorite tree for shipbuilding when ships were made of wood, and the ship called "Old Ironsides" that is a museum now still has the original deck built of white oak over 200 years ago! I told you, if you build something from me you build it to last.

Magnolia



Tell us something about yourself, Magnolia tree.

I have big, thick, shiny leaves and I grow like a giant bush sometimes. I'm actually not from around here, originally. I'm called "southern" magnolia because I like it most in the southern states.

Q

How did you get your name?

The person who first talked about me named me after his teacher, a famous french botanist named Pierre Magnol. He must have really liked his teacher! Do you have a teacher you would name something you discovered after?

A

What do animals like most about you?

Some birds like my seeds, and my thick canopy is a great place to hide.

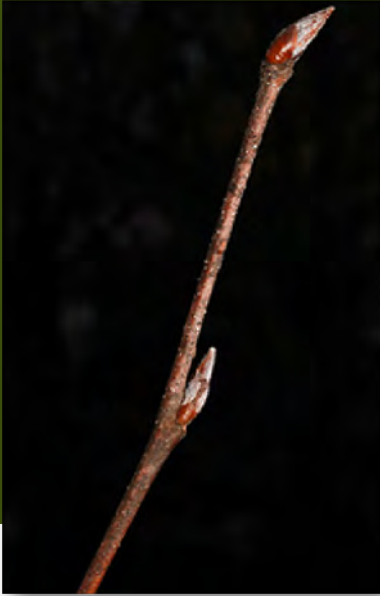
What do people like most about you?

My looks and my flowers. I have very large white flowers and a very unique smell when I am in bloom.

What's a fun fact about you?

Well, I like to drop my lower branches to the ground, and where they touch the ground they grow their own roots and then vertical sprouts grow up taller and make me look like one big tree surrounded by a ring of smaller trees.

River Birch



Tell us a little about yourself, River Birch tree.

I am mostly a small tree that likes to live along the banks of rivers and streams. I like to divide into two or three trees at the base, and have a thin bark that falls off of me like paper.

Q

So you got your name because you like rivers?

That's right. If you are anywhere near water I will probably be standing nearby. But not just rivers. Lakes, ponds, or streams as well.

A

What do animals like most about you?

I don't know that they think very much about me at all!

What do people like most about you?

I think it is my papery bark that people find interesting. It really makes me stand out as a tree compared to other natives.

What's a fun fact about you?

I like to float my seeds downstream in the spring so they can find nice muddy banks to grow in. Some tree seeds fly. Some tree seeds are spread by animals. But I like to send mine on nice little boat rides!

Pin Oak



Tell us a little about yourself, Pin Oak tree.



I grow more straight up than the others of my family. My trunk is like the mast of a ship! I like pretty wet soil, usually in floodplains or river edges, and usually don't grow as tall as the other oaks in my family. My lower branches droop down, my middle branches reach out, and my upper branches reach up, making me look almost like a big green egg when I grow in the open.

Q

A

How did you get your name?

If you saw me in winter, you wouldn't mistake me for any other oak. I have short little pin-like branchlets on my lateral branches that are very distinctive.

What do animals like most about you?

My acorns are enjoyed by waterfowl, turkeys, jays, woodpeckers, and squirrels.

What do people like most about you?

For an oak, I don't take up too much space, and I'm pretty tough in poor conditions, so I make a good street tree. But what many people like most about me is my beautiful fall color. The light shining through my red leaves is like light through a ruby.

What's a fun fact about you?

Unlike others in the Oak family, I don't mind getting my feet wet! I can tolerate flooding and sometimes form stands in low, wetter areas.

American Beech



Tell us a little about yourself.



I might be the smoothest-skinned tree you will find in the forest! I try to be everything that makes a tree special - strong, balanced, long lived, healthy, and above all, graceful. My smooth grey trunk flutes out at the base into strong feet. I like most to live in rich, well-drained bottoms and moist coves.

Q

A

How did you get your name?

What a wonderful story that is, and I wish I had time to tell it all! But my bark is so smooth that people have been writing or scratching things on me for thousands of years. Even the ancient Greeks talk about writing on me. And can you believe "Beech" derived from a Dutch word for "book?" Since people have always been writing on me, a long time ago you might say I was known as the "Book Tree!"

What do animals like most about you?

My Beech nuts are eaten by many birds and mammals, including mice, squirrels, chipmunks, black bear, deer, foxes, ruffed grouse, ducks, and blue jays. I told you I try my best to be special!

What do people like most about you?

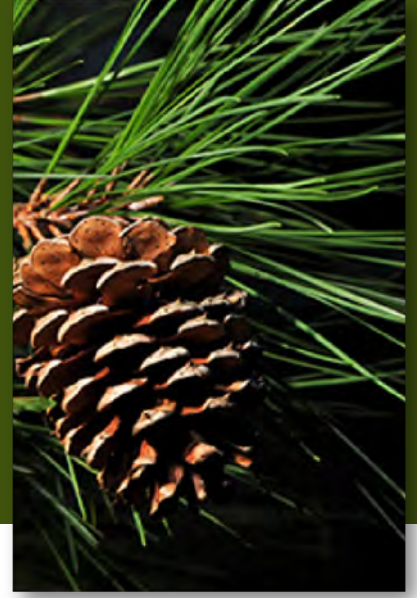
My wood is used for many things, because it is strong and tough, but it is not durable in the weather. Mostly people like my beauty, and **many people think I stand out as the finest tree in any landscape.**

What's a fun fact about you?

Until 1880 there was a tree near where Daniel Boone lived that had this written on it:

D. Boone, Cilled a Bar, On Tree, In Year 1760

Loblolly Pine



Tell us a little about yourself, Loblolly Pine tree.

I like to grow up in old fields and sandy, poorly drained soils. I'm so good at growing in an abandoned field that one of my common names is "Old Field Pine." I can grow in groups or all by myself.

Q

How did you get your name?

Well, in North Carolina, where many of my kind live, a "loblolly" is a natural pocket or depression in the ground, and since I love to grow in those, I began being called Loblolly Pine.

A

What do animals like most about you?

Squirrels will tear my cones apart to get the seeds, but I am more important to animals as habitat. When I gather with other loblolly pines we create a great habitat for pine warblers, brown-headed nuthatches, deer, grey and fox squirrels, quail, turkey, and many others.

What do people like most about you?

Unfortunately, it's my wood. I grow so fast that I become a great source of lumber. But if you don't need me for wood I think you will be impressed by my size and beauty. In lower sandy areas near the coast I stand tall and green where few other trees will stand. Some would say I even look soldierly!

What's a fun fact about you?

My cones are very skinny when green. If you put one into the small opening of a bottle the cone will eventually open up to full size when it dries out and people will wonder how in the world you got that pine cone in there!

Hackberry



Tell us a little bit about yourself, Hackberry tree.

I like to live along stream banks and lower areas, and usually don't grow too tall. My bark is very bumpy and is very unique amongst the other natives. I can live in very tough conditions.

Q

A

How did you get your name?

It's a bit of a mystery, but some people think the Scottish people started calling me Hackberry because I reminded them of one of their native trees called a "Hagberry."

What do the animals like most about you?

My berries make a good source of food for birds and small mammals in the fall.

What do people like most about you?

Not much, I'm afraid. I'm a little bit overlooked, but I am so tough that the forest service recommends I be planted where other trees struggle to grow.

What's a fun fact about you?

My fruit is edible by humans too, though you might find it a bit dry.

Willow Oak



Tell us a little bit about yourself, Willow Oak tree.



I like to grow fast and wide! I'll grow in low areas, but also in rich, sandy uplands. Out in the open I can grow almost as wide as I am tall. In the south I am everything you could ask a tree to be - a valuable timber crop, a rapidly growing ornamental tree, and a dooryard and household friend. In other words, I do my best to be liked!

Q

How did you get your name?

My leaves are small and slim, unlike most other oaks, making me look almost like a willow tree, so people called me a Willow oak.

A

What do the animals like most about you?

Just like the other oaks, it's mainly my acorns. My canopy is also a great nest building place for birds and squirrels.

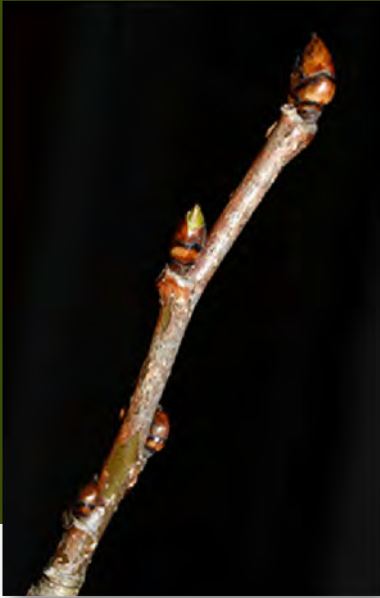
What do people like most about you?

My wood is strong and used for many things, but In the city what people like most about me is my wide, shady canopy. (they don't like cleaning up my small leaves when they fall, though)

What's a fun fact about you?

When I grow far enough south I sometimes act like an evergreen and don't drop all my leaves in the winter.

Red Mulberry



Tell us a little bit about yourself, Red Mulberry tree.

I don't grow too tall, but like to spread out wide. I like to grow mostly in floodplains and low, moist slopes. My berries are sweet, juicy, and edible by humans.

Q

How did you get your name.

My fruit is red when not yet ripe, and turns a deep purple when ripe in mid summer.

A

What do animals like most about you?

My berries are a favorite food for squirrels, opossums, raccoons, turkeys and many songbirds.

What do people like most about you?

Well, anybody who loves birds knows that birds love me, so having me in your yard means having birds in your yard.

What's a fun fact about you?

Native Americans once made cloaks by weaving the strands of fiber in my bark. I think I am one of the only trees that people once made clothes from!

Black Walnut



Tell us a little bit about yourself, Black Walnut tree.

I like to live in deep, well-drained soils, in moist coves and stream sides. I used to be everywhere, but have been used so much for furniture and other things that I am more rare now.

Q

How did you get your name?

My trunk wood is darker than any other tree. A rich, chocolate brown.

A

What do animals like most about you?

Squirrels and birds love my walnuts!

What do people like most about you?

Where should I begin - people like most everything about me! My looks as a tree, my wood, my walnuts. . . even the shells of my walnuts are ground up and used as a cleaning agent and a filler for dynamite.

What's a fun fact about you?

Well it might not be a fun fact for other trees, but I kind of like growing alone, and I secrete a toxic chemical that keeps many other species from growing near me. I'm a little standoffish, you might say.

Swamp Chestnut Oak



Tell us a little bit about yourself, Swamp Chestnut Oak tree.

I like to live in well-drained, loamy bottomlands and stream sides, and my bark looks a lot like the bark of white oak.

Q

How did you get your name?

Mainly because of how much I like to grow in low, swampy areas.

A

What do animals like most about you?

My acorns are an important food source for many species of birds and mammals.

What do people like most about you?

My wood is very hard, tough and strong, and is used for barrels, baskets, lumber, flooring, tools, and fuel.

What's a fun fact about you?

Cows like my large, sweet acorns so much that some people call me the "Cow Oak."

Northern Red Oak



Tell us a little about yourself, Red Oak tree.

I like to grow in deep, well-drained, loamy soils and fertile coves, and I grow all over Virginia. I like to grow tall, over 100 ft when I can, and my wood is very dense and heavy.

Q

How did you get your name?

For men who cut lumber, there have traditionally been two major types of oak. White and Red. My wood has a reddish color when it is cut, so I started being called the Red Oak.

A

What do animals like most about you?

My acorns are a favorite food for birds and mammals.

What do people like most about you?

Because of my symmetrical shape and fall color, I am a very desirable landscape tree.

What's a fun fact about you?

I am one of the most important timber trees in all of the eastern united states because I grow fast and strong.

Cottonwood



Tell us something about yourself, Cottonwood tree.

I like to grow on river borders, floodplains and other moist, well-drained sites.

Q

How did you get your name?

In the spring when I'm getting ready to release my seeds it looks like I am covered in cotton. After it all falls off it covers the ground and almost makes it look like snow in the summer.

A

What do animals like most about you?

I don't think I am much of a favorite for animals, except that my trunk often rots in the middle making me a good home for woodpeckers, owls, bluebirds, and starlings.

What do people like most about you?

I like to put on a show all year long. In late winter my boughs and twigs brighten with the rising sap, in the spring my bright yellow catkins appear before the leaves, and then of course it looks like I am covered in cotton right after that. My leaves have a special look and sound when they flutter in the wind.

What's a fun fact about you?

Wherever a group of cottonwoods live, it is likely there is water near the surface, and this was important for pioneers to know when moving through dry areas and looking for moist ground and water.

Dogwood



Tell us something about yourself, Dogwood tree.

I don't grow very tall. Usually only 20 to 30 ft. I like to live in the understory of hardwood forests, in many different types of soil. My wood is very hard, and very smooth and even today still used for shuttles in the weaving industry

Q

A

How did you get your name?

My hard wood is used for tools, and in England for daggers. The Old English word for dagger is "dagga" so dogwood is kind of an American shorthand for daggawood.

What do animals like most about you?

Though my fruits are poisonous if eaten by humans, more than 35 species of birds and many large and small animals like them. My white flowers in early spring before the leaves are on the other trees help me be seen by migrating birds flying high above so they can know where to fly down into the forest for a treat and a rest stop.

What do people like most about you?

My beauty! My flowers are some of the first of spring and are snowy white. If you look into the woods late in winter I will stand out amongst the leafless trees and make you excited that spring is well under way!

What is a fun fact about you?

I am the state tree of Virginia! And I was a favorite tree of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

Pawpaw



Tell us something about yourself, PawPaw tree.

I don't grow too tall, and look almost like a shrub growing in thickets in the forest. I like growing in the shade of the understory of hardwood forests, especially in moist floodplains.

Q

How did you get your name?

My fruit reminds people of the papaya, so in America I got the name Pawpaw.

A

What do animals like most about you?

My soft, custard-like fruit is eaten by raccoons, opossums, squirrels, and birds.

What do people like most about you?

People also like my fruit, which is one of the tastiest things you can find in the Virginia forest.

What's a fun fact about you?

Native Americans once wove my inner bark into fiber cloth, and pioneers used it for stringing fish.

Redbud



Tell us something about yourself, Redbud tree.

I only grow 15-30 ft and like to live in the understory of moist, well-drained woodlands. Most of the year I go mostly unnoticed, but in early spring you can't miss me.

Q

A

How did you get your name?

Because you can't miss me in the spring when I'm putting on my flower show! My flowers are more purplish pink than red, but for some reason people still call me redbud.

What do animals like most about you?

Some birds and mammals eat my seeds, but not too many.

What do people like most about you?

I am planted often as an ornamental tree in small landscapes because of my nice form and beautiful buds and flowers.

What is a fun fact about you?

My flowers are actually edible by humans, and some people make salads of them and in Mexico they are fried and eaten as a great delicacy.

Tulip Poplar



Tell us something about yourself, Tulip Poplar tree.

I like to grow fast and I like to grow tall! I have been known to reach 200 ft tall. I usually have a super straight trunk, and grow best on deep moist soils along streams and in lower mountain coves.

Q

A

How did you get your name?

I have one of the prettiest flowers of Virginia's native trees, almost like a tulip, so people call me tulip poplar.

What do animals like most about you?

My sprouts and buds are a major food of deer, and birds and squirrels eat my seeds. Most importantly, though, my flowers are an important nectar source for honey production, and where you see me you will probably see bees and butterflies.

What do people like most about you?

They like how fast I grow and my pretty flowers, but I am also one of the most valuable hardwood trees in the United States. Maybe I should be called the Popular Tree!

What's a fun fact about you?

Stands of poplar are favorites with mushroom hunters, because the prized morel mushrooms grow best under us.

Sycamore



Tell us something about yourself, Sycamore tree.

I am a very thirsty tree, and like to grow on stream banks and rich bottomlands where I can drink to my heart's content. Here in Richmond you will see me lined up all along the edge of the James River. I grow wide and I grow tall!

Q

A

How did you get your name?

My name is carried down from thousands of years ago, and in ancient Greece people spoke of a "sycaminos" tree to talk about a big leafed shade tree like me.

What do the animals like most about you?

Songbirds eat my seeds, but I might be most known by the animals as a roosting or den site, since I often am hollow on the inside when I get old, and make a great warm and dry home.

What do people like most about you?

Many things are made from my wood, but I am most known for my striking appearance in the winter when my white bark stands out against all the brown and grey of the sleeping winter forest. I guess you could say I'm like the nightlight of the forest.

What is a fun fact about you?

People have talked about how giant I can be since they first came to America, and I have the largest trunk diameter of any hardwood tree in the North American forest.

Black Oak



Tell us something about yourself, Black Oak tree.

I grow medium tall, 50-80ft usually, and not too large around. I like to live in dry woods and along ridges, but I grow best on rich, well-drained soils.

Q

How did you get your name?

When I get older my bark is almost black in color.

A

What do animals like about you?

Just like with the rest of the oaks, the animals love my acorns!

What do people like most about you?

I'm afraid people don't take much notice of me, though in earlier times I was important to weavers as a dye, because my inner bark is yellow or orange.

What's a fun fact about you?

I guess it's that because I am the only oak with this yellow inner bark, another common name for me is "Yellow Oak"

Red Cedar



Tell us something about yourself, Red Cedar.

I live on a wide variety of soils, from wetlands to dry, rocky ridges, and can live on barren soils where few other trees are found. I like to grow about 40-60 ft tall.

Q

How did you get your name?

People have used a word like Cedar to describe trees like me for as long as anyone can remember, and nobody really knows where the word originally comes from.

A

What do animals like most about you?

I am an animal favorite! I am a favorite food of many birds, from waxwings to bobwhite quail. My dense foliage provides excellent roosting and nesting cover for birds. Deer use my foliage as an emergency winter food source.

What do people most like about you?

The natural oils in my wood repel insects, so people like to use me for chests, closet linings and pet bedding. I am very resistant to decay, so if you want to build anything that will stay outdoors or on the ground I'm the wood for you.

What's a fun fact about you?

Well, I don't drink alcohol myself, but my berries are what give the alcohol called "gin" its characteristic flavor.

Black Locust



Tell us something about yourself, Black Locust tree.

I'm pretty short, only 30-70 ft tall when full grown, and I grow best in moist soft places with limestone beneath.

Q

A

How did you get your name?

When the settlers first arrived they thought my seed pod looked like the honey-locust seed pod, so they called me locust. Locust trees were first called that because our fruit resembles the insect called a locust. You'll have to interview a locust insect if you want to know how he got his name.

What do animals like most about you?

My sprouts and seedlings are an important food for cottontail rabbits and deer. Bobwhite quail and other game birds eat my seeds. Older trees with cavities are great nesting sites for woodpeckers. My flowers are an important nectar source for honey production.

What do people like most about you?

My wood is very hard and strong and resistant to decay, but if you don't need my wood you will love my showy, white flowers.

What's a fun fact about you?

The earliest settlers in Jamestown didn't really know how to make log cabins, but they used me for corner posts for their little hovels, and my wood is so tough that some of these posts can still be seen hundreds of years later!

Fringe Tree



Tell us something about yourself, Fringe Tree

I'm really just a delicate little tree, 30-40 ft tall, and I like to grow along streams or in mountains.

Q

A

How did you get your name?

I have such beautiful flowers that people like to plant me along their landscape borders, kind of like a fringe to a dress.

What do animals like about you?

I can't tell that they think about me much at all, except I'm pretty sure some of them eat my blue fruits.

What do people like most about you?

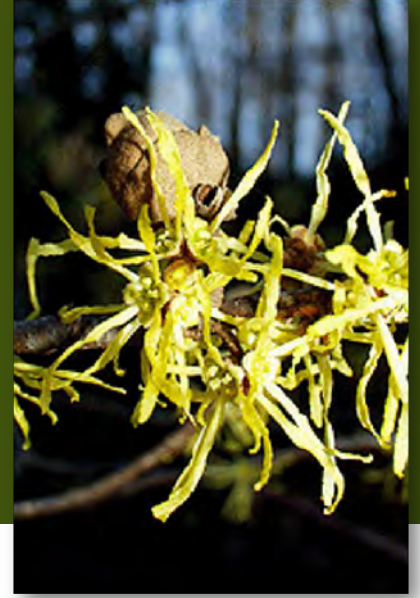
My beauty and smell, for sure.

What's a fun fact about you?

One of my other common names is Old Man's-beard. If you look at the picture of my flowers I guess you can tell why!



Witch Hazel



Tell us something about yourself, Witch Hazel tree. Should we be scared of you?



Well, I think I'm quite normal, but people do think I'm pretty weird. I live in the shade of the understory, and my flowers come out after my leaves have dropped in late fall. True, I guess, my flowers are odd shaped, and my fruits strange too. And some think I have magical properties. Ok, so I'm pretty weird, but you don't have to be scared!

Q

How did you get your name?

Well, there are legends that say witches can use me to help them find water, or gold, or other things in the earth.

A

What do animals like most about you?

Well, I'll be honest. The animals might think I'm scary. When I am ready I shoot my shiny, hard black seeds out somewhat violently. Sometimes 20ft or more.

What do people like most about you?

I am very aromatic, and am used in after-shave lotion and cleaning liquid because of my cleanly aroma.

You are almost nothing but fun facts! Is there anything else?

It is quite true, whether it really worked or not, that people used to take one of my forked branches where the forks pointed north and south, and they would hold me by the forks and carry me around and if they felt a tug down on the stem they assumed it was caused by the flow of hidden water or hidden gold. I can neither confirm nor deny the truth of these claims:)

Sweetbay Magnolia



Tell us something about yourself, Sweetbay Magnolia tree.

I don't grow too tall, usually only 20-30 ft. I like swamp edges, and other low, wet areas. People also like to plant me in their yards because they think I look so nice.

Q

How did you get your name?

I'm not really sure, but when my flowers come out they have a mild, lemony scent that people might think smells sweet, and I like to live near bays. Other than that, I have no idea.

A

What do animals like most about you?

My foliage and twigs are a favorite browse for deer, and my seeds are eaten by birds and small mammals.

What do people like most about you?

I think it's mostly my looks and my flowers.

What's a fun fact about you.

I am always very late shedding my leaves, and further south I am almost an evergreen and don't shed many leaves at all.

Persimmon



Tell us something about yourself, Persimmon tree.

I only grow 20 - 60 ft tall, and I grow on a wide variety of sites, from sandy woods to moist river bottoms to rocky slopes.

Q

A

How did you get your name?

Native Americans have known me and appreciated my sweet fruit as long as can be remembered, and when they showed it to new Americans they called it "Pasimenan." I guess at some point it just kind of changed in English to Persimmon.

What do the animals like most about you?

I'm like a tasty dessert of the forest for opossums, raccoons, skunks, foxes, and many songbirds.

What do people like most about you?

I'm a tasty dessert for you, too! Native Americans made yummy bread out of me, and you will never have a more delicious treat than a properly made persimmon pudding or persimmon pie.

What's a fun fact about you?

Just when my fruit looks the best, plump and orange, is just when you absolutely do not want to try it! It will make you think you are eating cotton and leave your mouth puckered for hours! The time to eat my fruit is actually when it is all wrinkled and purple and looks like it would taste horrible.