

NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION

NAP's mission is to protect and restore Ann Arbor's natural areas and foster an environmental ethic within the community.



*Flowering dogwood in bloom, John Lloyd
Willow flowers, Harold Eyster, NAP Photo Contest 2009
Hackberry bark, NAP staff*



Ann Arbor's Talent Show of Trees

Becky Hand, Stewardship Specialist

As the old saying goes, sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees, but have you ever thought about not being able to see the trees for the forest? Many of Ann Arbor's trees have unique and unusual features that you might not notice during casual walks through our forests filled mostly with oaks and hickories. Read on to learn more about some of our trees that have distinctive characteristics!

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TULIPTREE

Liriodendron tulipifera

Common names: tulip poplar, yellow poplar, whitewood, fiddle-tree

Tuliptrees can be found in moist, fertile habitats where their straight, branch-free trunks can grow to massive heights. George Washington planted tuliptrees at Mount Vernon that are now 140 feet tall, and the largest tuliptree in Michigan is almost 200 feet tall! These trees are known for their flowers, which resemble greenish-yellow tulips with an orange center. The flowers are large and sturdy because they need to withstand being pollinated by beetles and other insects that are not very gentle as they buzz around inside the flower.

Cedar Waxwing sipping from a Tulip Poplar bloom, Wildreturn, CC BY 2.0

Bird Hills tuliptree grove, NAP Staff

MORE TULIPTREE FACTS

One of the common names, “fiddle-tree”, comes from the shape of the leaves, which resemble small violins.

Tuliptrees do not typically bloom until they are 15 years old.

Some tuliptrees can grow to 50 ft. without a single branch.



“Tamarack Sunset”, Thaddeus Hejka

Larix laricina young cones, Steven Katovich, USDA Forest Service, CC BY 3.0



Larix laricina needles close up, Mike Gifford, CC BY-SA 2.0

Larch Larix laricina cones, Paul Asman and Jull Lenoble, CC BY 2.0

TAMARACK

Larix laricina

Common names: hackmatack, eastern larch, black larch, red larch, American larch

Tamaracks are medium-sized coniferous trees that grow in cold, wet, poorly drained sites. Their name is derived from an Algonquin word that means “wood for making snowshoes.” Tamarack needles are

soft and grow in little fan-shaped clusters. Unlike most coniferous trees, tamaracks are deciduous, which means they lose their needles every year. Tamarack needles turn yellow in the fall before dropping off for the winter, which can be a worrying sight for some who might think the tree is turning yellow because it’s sick. Thankfully, the needles will return the following spring!

TAMARACK LOOK-ALIKE: LARCH

Larix decidua

Common names: Western larch, common larch, European larch

Larch has longer needles—up to 4 in; more needles per cluster—20-50; and is taller than the 40 to 70 ft. tamarack, with larch reaching up to 150 ft.

KENTUCKY COFFEETREE

Gymnocladus dioicus

Common names: American coffee berry, Kentucky mahogany, nicker tree, stump tree

Kentucky coffeetree is a medium- to large-sized tree that can be found on river floodplains. Their leaves are composed of many small leaflets, which emerge late in the spring and drop off the tree early in the fall. Because this tree spends half of the year without leaves, and because its upper branches are somewhat twisty and few in number, some people refer to this tree as a “haunted house tree.” What really makes the tree notable, however, are its fruits, which are rounded seeds in a stout pod. The seeds resemble coffee beans, and they were actually roasted and used as a poor coffee substitute by early settlers. Kentucky coffeetrees used to be a species of special concern in Michigan, but thankfully, they were recently removed from the special species list.

BEHIND THE NAME

Gymnocladus is from the Greek word, *gymnos*, meaning naked, and *kladdos*, meaning branch. This name refers to the short time Kentucky coffeetrees keep their leaves.

Kentucky coffeetree has separate male and female trees, which makes it a dioecious plant—giving it the second part of its name, *dioicus*.



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Fabaceae Gymnocladus dioica,
NasserHalaweh, CC BY-SA 4.0

Seed pods, T. Davis Sydnor, *The Ohio State University*,
Bugwood.org

Seed pod with seeds, Vern Wilkins, *Indiana University*,
Bugwood.org

Inside seed pod with pulp, Robert Videki, *Doronicum Kft.*,
Bugwood.org



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HONEY LOCUST

Gleditsia triacanthos

Common names: honeylocust, thorny locust, thorny honeylocust

Honey locust is a medium-sized tree that may be found in floodplains adjacent to streams and lakes. Like Kentucky coffeetree, its leaves are composed of many small leaflets, and its seeds are formed in long, thin pods. The “honey” term in the tree’s name comes from the sweet, honey-like pulp found in the seed pods. The really interesting part of this tree, however, is its bark, which is covered with scary-looking clusters of stout, sharp thorns. The thorns are thought to be a defense mechanism that is a relic from the time when mammoths roamed the landscape, knocking down trees as they went. Today, a thornless variety of the honey locust is a very popular street tree.

BEHIND THE NAME

Gleditsia comes from the 18th century German botanist, Gottlieb Gleditsch.

The thorns of the honey locust give it the designation, *triacanthos*, meaning, three-spined. Three parts of the tree have thorns—trunk, branches, and stems.

Gleditsia triacanthos, AfroBrazilian, CC BY-SA 4.0

Gleditsia triacanthos, SAplants, CC BY-4.0



SYCAMORE

Platanus occidentalis

Common names: American sycamore, American planetree, western plane, occidental plane, buttonwood, water beech

Sycamore trees are large trees that grow in floodplain forests adjacent to rivers. This is another tree that can reach gargantuan proportions—the largest sycamore in Michigan is 160 feet tall, and its trunk is almost 25 feet around! The most notable characteristic of the sycamore tree is its bark, which is broken into gray, white, yellowish, and blueish plates near the bottom, giving the tree a mottled look. As you go up the trunk, the plates become more separated, and the uppermost trunk and branches are pure white. This white bark can make the trees appear dead from a distance, especially when there are no leaves on the branches. When sycamores are injured, they decay and hollow out quickly. Pioneers used old, hollow sycamore logs to smoke meat and store grain.

American Sycamore bark—Platanus occidentalis, Leesylvania State Park, Woodbridge Virginia, Judy Gallagher, CC BY 2.0

SYCAMORE LOOK-ALIKE: LONDON PLANE

Platanus x hispanica

London plane has fruits in clusters of two, while sycamore has solitary fruits. London plane loses more of the flaky outer bark, giving it a dull greenish brown appearance.



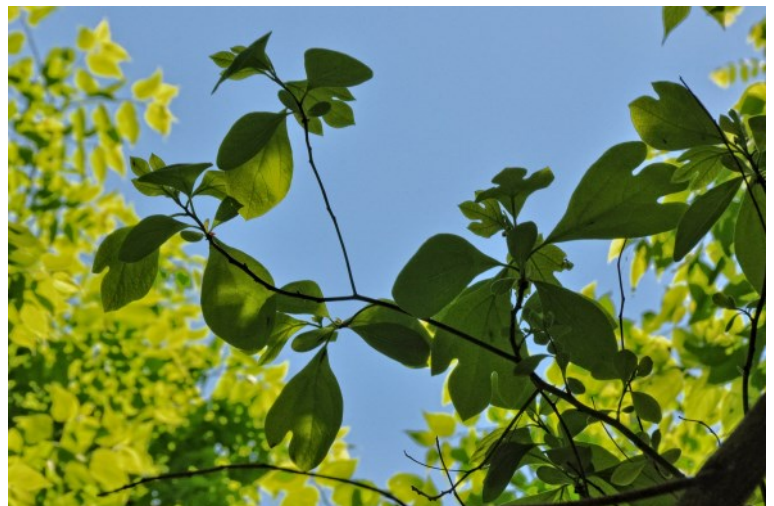
“Sycamore Flower”, Harold Eyster, NAP Photo Contest 2009

SASSAFRAS

Sassafras albidum

Common names: white sassafras, red sassafras, silky sassafras

Sassafras is a small to medium-sized tree that grows in partly moist forests. What makes it stand out from other trees is its unusual leaves, which can grow in three different shapes: a simple oblong leaf, a “mitten-shaped” leaf with two lobes, or a “ghost-shaped” leaf with three lobes! The leaves have a pleasant smell when crushed, like fruity cereal. Oil from the roots of the sassafras tree was used to flavor root beer until the 1960s when it was found to be carcinogenic.



SASSAFRAS LEAF SHAPES



simple, oblong



mitten, two lobes



ghost, three lobes

Sassafras albidum Point Pelee, Mykola Swarnyk, CC BY-SA 4.0

FIND ONE OF ANN ARBOR'S TALENTED TREES

TULIPTREE

- Bird Hills Nature Area—along the main north/south path
- Leslie Woods Nature Area

TAMARACK

- West Park
- Oakridge Nature Area
- Thurston Nature Center (AAPS)
- Matthaei Botanical Gardens (UM)
—nice tamarack swamp!

KENTUCKY COFFEETREE

- Lakewood Nature Area—the trail entrance from the school
- Bird Hills Nature Area

HONEY LOCUST

- Black Pond Woods—south west area
- Braun Nature Area
- Scarlett Mitchell Nature Area
- Olson Park
- Gallup Park

SYCAMORE

- Fuller Park/Island Park—behind Fuller Pool, along the river
- Bandemer Nature Area
- Bird Hills Nature Area
- Braun Nature Area
- Mary Beth Doyle Nature Area

SASSAFRAS

- Black Pond Woods—north west area near Tibbits Ct
- Bird Hills Nature Area—southern area
- Barton Nature Area
- Brokaw Nature Area
- Marshall Nature Area
- Huron Parkway Nature Area

NAPPENINGS

Staff Updates

Farewell

Mike Hahn

Stewardship Specialist

Mike joined NAP in 2014, during the transition to our new office location on Huron River Drive. His expertise and leadership brought visible and invisible improvements to Ann Arbor's natural areas and NAP as an organization. Notably, the prairie at Furstenberg is larger and healthier than ever; the land surrounding the NAP office at South Pond Nature Area has become a wonderfully wild space with dozens of fabulous native plants and countless critters; the kame at Ruthven now displays its full glory of unique wildflowers and wildlife; and the dozens of NAP staff who worked with Mike continue to benefit professionally and personally from his knowledge, guidance, and camaraderie. NAP would surely not be as successful at fulfilling our mission if we hadn't had him on our team the last nine years.

Mike will still be working for Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation, as he is now a Parks and Public Space Maintenance Supervisor. While he sits at a desk in a different building, and he's gone from NAP, he's still with us in our hearts. Congratulations, Mike!

Farewell



Kirstin Palumbo

Conservation Crew

I would like to thank everyone for all the knowledge and kindness they shared with me during my time at NAP. It has been a pleasure working with such a

great Crew, and I am thankful for the connections that I have made along the way. While I am looking forward to this next chapter pursuing my Master's, I will deeply miss everyone at NAP.



Mike Hahn at a spring burn.

Thank you!

Many thanks to the individuals and groups who helped out with volunteer work or other support over the winter months. We could not make such a difference without you!

- EMU Women's Swim and Dive
- Friends of Dicken Woods
- Greenhills School
- The Goats EMU
- Navitas Systems
- NAP Park Stewards
- TRC
- UM Alpha Epsilon Delta
- UM Alpha Kappa Alpha—Beta Eta
- UM Chi Epsilon
- UM Delta Gamma
- UM Epsilon Eta
- UM LSA Student Government
- UM Medical Scientist Training Program
- UM Tau Beta Pi
- UM Tau Beta Sigma
- Yale Alumni Association
- Youth for Understanding

Nature Stewardship VOLUNTEER REWARDS RANKINGS



30

points

bur oak

prize: exclusive NAP event

Brooks C. Craig P.



14

points

buttonbush

prize: NAP hoodie

Alec A. Jim Y. Scott L.
Dan P. Ron E. Tiffany N.



6

points

big bluestem

prize: NAP shirt*

Angel F. Annika M. Antoni W. Bowe Z. Brad S.	Dave C. Ellen W. Emily B. Jamie H. Jen R.	Jonathan P. Liz G. Margot M. Mark C. Mark T.	Olivia B. Peter S. Richard G.
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3

points

bee balm

prize: NAP cap

Alison A. Ashley K. Audra E. Ben G. Bowe Z. Brian G. Carol L. Carol M. Catherine R. Donald G.	Donald M. Doug W. Eliot A. Ellie A. Elyce R. Ethan L. Gina K. Guillermo M. Jacob Z. Jasmine N.	Jason F. Jerome P. Joe R. Judy S. Justin I. Karin M. Linda B. Lucas C. Margot M. Markus B.	Molly B. Muhammad A. Priscilla D. Renée H. Rob D. Stephanie H. Tricia J. Victor C. Bill N. Zach F.
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1

point

bloodroot

prize: NAP 2023 pin

433 volunteers!

**We will no longer be giving out t-shirts at the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Party—so get leveled-up to get your shirt this year!!*



Attend NAP events in 2023 to receive points!

1

event

=

1

point

Register now for NAP events at vhub.at/NAP and start earning points!

EVENTS

May-June Volunteer Workdays

Find full details at a2gov.org/NAPEvents

- Berkshire Creek 5/6
- Sunset Brooks 5/7
- Miller 5/7
- Black Pond Woods 5/13
- Marshall 5/13
- Narrow Gauge Way 5/14
- Molin 5/20
- Huron Parkway 5/20
- Bird Hills 5/21
- Cedar Bend 5/21
- Bluffs 6/3
- Ruthven 6/10
- Fuller 6/10
- Bird Hills 6/11
- Brokaw 6/11
- Dolph 6/17
- Hickory 6/18
- Olson 6/24
- Barton 6/25