



Top Ten Trees of Prince William Forest Park

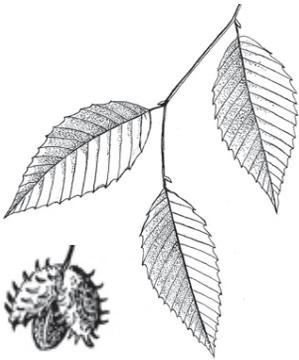


This aerial photo shows Cabin Camp 4. The cabins of Prince William Forest Park were built using onsite materials such as oak and pine.

Overview

Prince William Forest Park protects 15,000 acres of piedmont forest - the largest section of piedmont forest in the National Parks System. Over 700 species of trees, shrubs and ferns exist inside the park boundaries. This land was not always bountiful with spring buds and autumn colors. If you listen, the trees will tell you stories dating back thousands of years. From Daniel Boone to the development of our cabin camps, the trees are speaking. Listed below are ten of the many species of trees of Prince William Forest Park.

American Beech *Fagus grandifolia*



The American beech tree is characterized by gray bark that grows as fast as the tree itself giving it the smooth texture, unlike the flaky bark of the sycamore tree. The beech is easily identified along trails as it tends to bear the engravings of young love and glory.

Daniel Boone took part in this form of writing when he inscripted his hunter's triumph upon a beech tree of already two centries old in the eastern mountains of Tennessee:

D. Boone
Cilled A Bar
On Tree
In Year 1760

The English word 'book' dates to the Anglo-Saxon word of 'boc', meaning letter or character in turn derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'beece' for beech.

The wood of the American Beech has been popular for its ability to bend when steamed. This quality was highly sought out when wooden snowshoes were a necessary method of travel.

The American beech may be seen along many trails, but especially along the High Meadows trail. With your help the park can maintain its beautifully large American Beech trees. We ask that you respect these trees and do not mark them in any way - engravings make the trees susceptible to fungi and disease.

American Holly *Ilex opaca*



Best known as the "Christmas Holly", this broadleaved tree is a rarity in that it is also an evergreen. This unique character makes it a favorite among birds. During the winter the leaves of the American holly offer birds protection from avian predators and its berries are a last food source.

The holly was a favorite of George Washington as he wrote about it in his diary fairly often. He once wrote of transplanting many 'little hollies' to his Mount Vernon home, only to write again a year later that

they had all died. Washington often received small holly trees as gifts.

The American holly comes in a male and a female form, with only the female plant growing the berries. The male plant pollinates multiple females through bees.

Picking berries are harmful to the trees and harmful to humans if eaten. The American holly can be spotted along the North Valley Trail.

Black Tupelo *Nyssa sylvatica*



Detested by lumberman for its interbraided and crosswoven grain, the black tupelo could not easily be downed by ax, wedge, or sledge. However, this unique quality made it a superb wood for the handles of heavy-duty tools that needed to absorb shock such as the ax used for splitting wood.

The wood from black tupelo was also used in railroad ties. It is possible they were used in the railroad system that came through the park to support the old Pyrite Mine. The wood would have been strong and

durable enough to sustain the strains of the heavy loads of pyrite.

You may be able to identify the black tupelo through its characteristic of growing shorter as it grows older. This tree actually begins to decay from the top down and when its strength can no longer bear its weight, the tops fall off. This species has also been referred to as sourgum or black gum and the latin name means "water nymph of the forest". See if you can find this tree along the Birch Bluff trail.

Mountain Laurel
Kalmia latifolia

Mountain laurel is a spring time favorite for its beautiful pink and white flowers with its bright evergreen leaves that line the banks of the Quantico Creek and its tributaries. A walk along any part of the North or South Valley trails during May or June will expose you to this brilliant display.

The wood from this tree was used by the American Indians to make spoons giving this species another common name of "spoonwood". It is not

recommended to try carving your own utensils out of this wood as every part of this tree is poisonous.

This tree does not grow large, but it does sprout a lot of extremities that fill in the area around it. In 2006, a 318 acre forest fire occurred in the park and this particular plant played a significant role in providing fuel for the fire as its many branches are small and grow near the ground.

Red Maple
Acer rubrum

In spring, the red maple will show off shades of red in its buds, petioles, twigs, flowers and seeds. It shows its brilliant scarlet foliage throughout the autumn season as the leaves change back to the color of which they were derived as buds. All year long this is a species worth seeing.

The red maple is very valuable to the natural ecosystem as a source of food for a diverse species

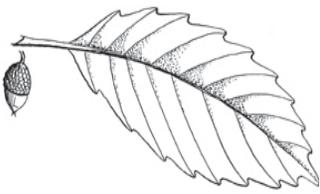
of wildlife including the white tailed deer. If the area was ever over-populated with white tailed deer, then the park could have a significant decline in red maple. Although hunting is not allowed inside Prince William Forest Park, it is allowed on neighboring lands keeping the deer population in check, and in turn maintaining a healthy level of red maple in the park. See for yourself its spectacular colors along the Farms to Forest trail.

Virginia Pine
Pinus virginiana

The most common species in Prince William Forest Park is the Virginia pine. This species has seen the development of the park from the beginning. In the 1930s, in addition to oak, this species was lumbered to provide the necessary materials to construct the five cabin camps in Prince William Forest Park.

Although this species was heavily logged, it was also heavily planted. When the Cabin Branch Pyrite Mine was found to be highly-contaminated long after its

closure, the National Park Service reclaimed this site to its natural setting. 5,000 Virginia pine saplings were planted along the hillside of the failed mine. It was believed that this was one tree that could tolerate the high levels of sulfur that remained in the soil and water. Today trees continue to be planted in an attempt to reclaim the area and bring the Quantico Creek water quality back to its natural standards. This site can be seen from the Cabin Branch Mine trail.

Chestnut Oak
Quercus prinus

One of the oldest living chestnut oaks is called the "Washington Oak" located on the Hudson River. It is believed to be 800 to 1,000 years old. Can you imagine how many sweetly tasting acorns a tree like this would have provided as food for wildlife? As you hike the Turkey Run Ridge trail, can you spot any wildlife eating the acorns?

It is through this species that the saying "she threatened to tan our hides" originated. You may

have heard this while growing up and misbehaving. A chemical called "tannin" is found in the bark, leaves, and wood of this tree. It is commonly used to tan raw hides (i.e. animal skin) to make leather.

Acorns had several uses for early pioneers. Today the classic button is made of a plastic or metal, but pioneers used the caps of acorns. The remainder of the acorn could be dried and ground to a powder to be used as a sweet thickening agent for stew.

Yellow Poplar
Liriodendron tulipifera

The yellow poplar, commonly referred to as the "Tulip Tree", has a leaf and yellow flower that mimic the shape of a tulip. This flower is best seen through April and May, and may be viewed along the Mary Bird Branch trail. The tulip tree is often mistaken as part of the maple or even the poplar families, but it is truly part of the magnolia family, representing the tallest of all hardwood trees in North America.

Although considered a hard wood, the wood from this tree is softer than most softwoods in North America. Its bulk and light weight, combined with the straightness of the trunk, made this tree a favored species for American Indians to shape into canoes as large as 16 feet. Daniel Boone used such a canoe to move his family down the Ohio River.

White Oak
Quercus alba

Oaks are said to be the king of trees, and white oak is said to be the king of oaks. Its height does not give it this claim for the yellow poplar grows taller, but the branches spread reaches out like no other tree. Walk along the Oak Ridge trail to view this beautiful tree.

Oaks had a dual purpose during the early farm years. A favorite by loggers they were heavily logged for the construction of farm houses. White oak was also used for the construction of the many cabins

throughout the park. However, some oaks were too large to be worth the time to be cut. Rather than fussing with their size, these oaks were kept standing to provide shade for the newly-erected farm homes.

The durable and high-quality wood of the white oak makes great uses when cut into narrow strips which can be used for such things as wine or whiskey barrels. The larger trees were used to deck many of America's great wooden ships.

Sycamore
Platanus occidentalis

Sycamore is one of the most massive trees of Virginia with a fast growing characteristic. In the 1960s and 1970s the coastal plains of Virginia saw large establishments of Sycamore plantations. The wood is primarily used for furniture.

It is a very messy tree unable to take care of itself. You will find this tree to have bark that flakes off in rather large sections. The flakes are due to the tree growing faster than the bark tissue can expand.

In some areas you will find that this species is a tree of choice as a street tree for its ability to provide shade and endure the harsh environment of compact soil and car pollution. In the urban setting however, it continues to require looking after with its habit of dropping bark, leaves, and seeds. Often times the root system of this tree can lift up sidewalks and the fallen foliage releases a chemical that can kill off grass. Can you spot this tree as you drive along the Prince William Forest Park scenic drive?