The Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail presents:

Trees of the Trail

A self-guided tour of the Bloomingdale Trail

By Nandika Gervais

https://www.bloomingdaletrail.org/

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A Shawnee Brave bald cypress behind alliums near N. Ridgeway Ave. in June.

Hackberry's ridged bark.

N. Ridgeway Ave. to N. Lawndale Ave.

Shawnee Brave Bald Cypress *(Taxodium distichum 'Michelson')* Located at the western entrance to the trail, these deciduous conifers have feathery, bright green alternate needles that are soft in the spring and turn golden copper before they drop in the fall. This cypress has a shaggy, reddish-brown bark, a narrow growth habit, and a strong central leader.

Cornelian Cherry Dogwood *(Cornus mas)* Near the western observatory, these dogwoods have yellow flowers that bloom in early spring before rounded clusters of leaves called umbels emerge. The dark-green leaves are ovate to elliptic and about 4" long. The fruits are fleshy one-seeded drupes which mature to a cherry red color in mid-summer. The fruits are edible, but sour, and can be used for making syrups and preserves.

Common Hackberry *(Celtis Occidentalis)* Hackberry is easily distinguishable by the wart-like bumps or ridges on its bark called protuberances. The tree's small, fleshy drupes are edible and sweet once they turn deep-purple. Hackberries provide food and habitat for many birds and other animals. Located just west of N. Lawndale Ave.

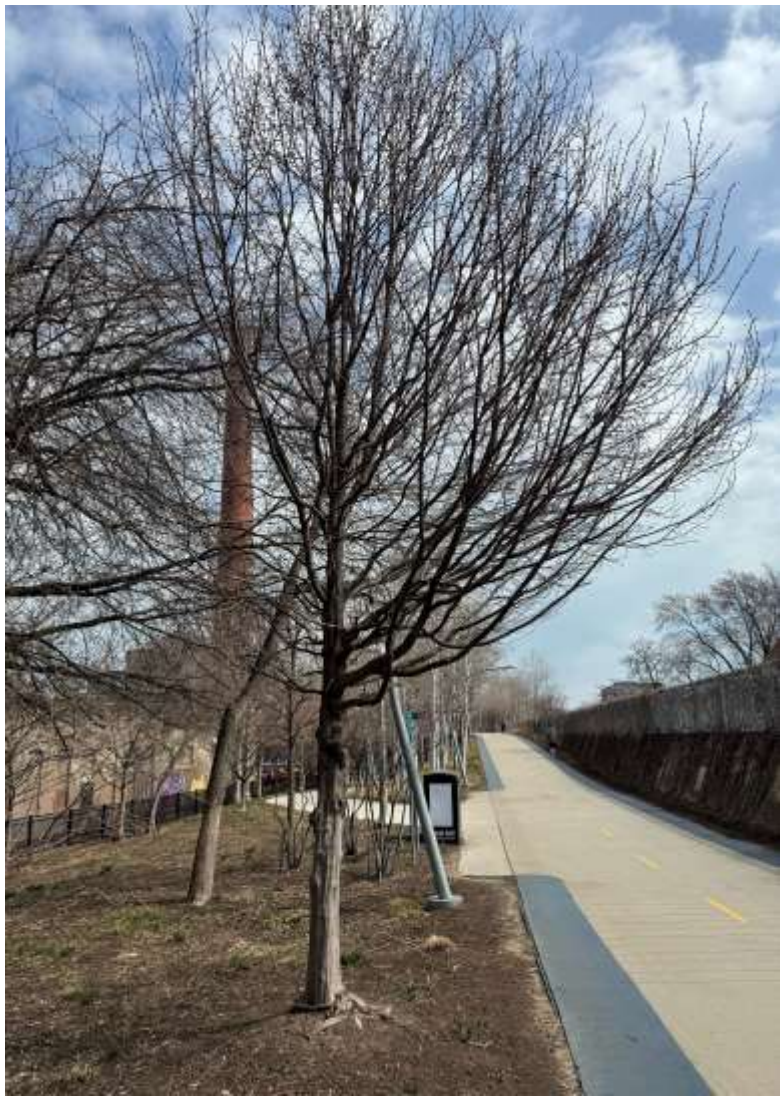
American witch-hazel at N. Monticello Ave. in late fall.

N. Monticello Ave. to N. Central Park Ave.

American Witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana)* Near the seating area, this deciduous shrub has forked twigs and clusters of bright-yellow flowers, each with four crinkly petals that appear on the plant between October and December. The genus *hama*, meaning 'at the same time,' refers to it having flowers and fruits simultaneously. The fruits start green then become woody and brown. The bark and leaves were used by Native Americans to treat inflammation, and the plant is still commonly used as an astringent and sold commonly in stores.

Silver Queen Maple *(Acer saccharinum 'Silver Queen')* Located in a side lot, just north of the trail at Monticello, the silvery undersides of the leaves and strong upright branching make the 'Silver Queen' distinguishable from other maples. Their samaras are large and hang in clusters, with foliage that is bright green in summer and golden yellow in fall.

Frontier Elm *(Ulmus carpinfolia x parvifolia 'Frontier')* This elm's bark is smooth, and greyish green with orange markings called lenticels. The small, glossy, dark-green leaves of this cultivated elm turn a deep burgundy and purple color in fall. Found along the side path, near the center.



European hornbeam west of the N. Drake Ave. entrance., in midwinter.

The veined leaves of the hornbeam in late spring.

N. Central Park Ave. to N. Drake Ave.

American Hornbeam *(Carpinus caroliniana)* The leaves of the American hornbeam are ovate, 4” long, double-toothed and veined. The leaves turn from dark green in summer, to orange and red in autumn. The bark is smooth, grey, and fluted. Located north of the entrance ramp at Drake Ave.

European Hornbeam *(Carpinus betulus)* European hornbeams are often found with a crooked and fluted trunk and smooth grey bark. The leaves are alternate, with prominent veins and a serrated margin. European hornbeam is in the birch family and develops male and female catkins which are pollinated by wind. The wood is and heavy and hard and is used for making tools and for building construction. You can spot one on the north side of the trail, west of Drake Ave.

Green Hawthorn *(Crataegus viridis ‘Winter King’)* Found just north of the entrance ramp at Drake Ave., this deciduous tree is in the rose family and has showy white five-petal flowers in spring. Its smooth, grey-green bark sheds to reveal rust-colored patches underneath. Bright orange berries appear in late summer and persist throughout the winter. They are a great source of food for birds.

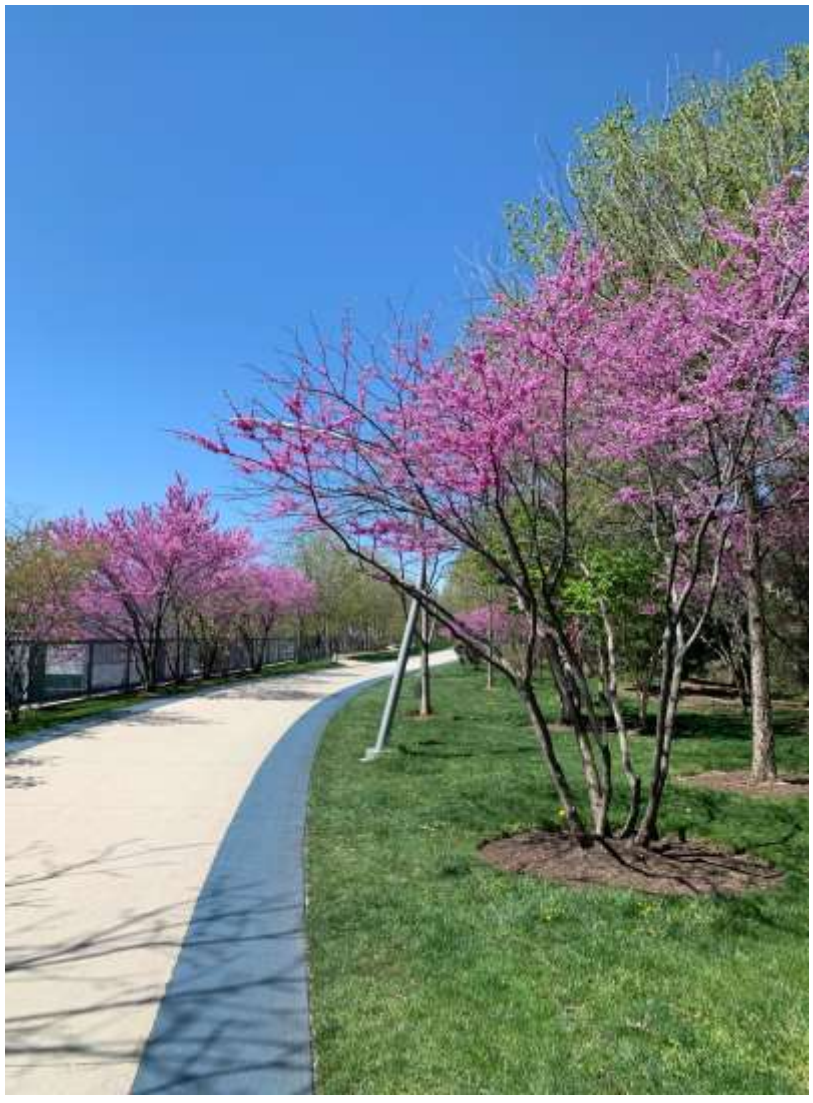
A poplar thicket of quaking aspens east of N. Drake Ave.

N. Drake Ave. to N. St. Louis Ave.

Quaking Aspen *(Populus tremuloides)* Known for their small round leaves which seem to tremble in the breeze, quaking aspens are the most widely distributed tree species in North America. The bark is stark white, with eye-like marks left behind by its self-pruning process. A side path between the thicket of aspens creates a quiet respite from the hustle and bustle of the trail. There are benches here to sit and enjoy the experience of the leaves shaking all around you. Very striking color in the fall.

Black Walnut *(Juglans nigra)* Near Drake, north of the aspen thicket, these native trees have large green fruit containing edible walnuts that squirrels love. Their leaves are alternate, long and pinnately compound with toothed edges. The leaves have a citrus scent when crushed.

Siberian Elm (*Ulmus pumila)* Just east of St. Louis Ave., on the north side of the trail, these elms have small leaves that are elliptic and tapered, with sharp teeth. The bark is grayish-brown and roughly corrugated. These elms are resistant to Dutch elm disease but are highly aggressive and invasive.



Eastern redbud trees in late April.

Catalpa flowers in late May.

N. St. Louis Ave. to N. Kimball Ave.

Eastern Redbud *(Cercis canadensis)* After their showy pink blossoms appear in clusters along the stems in late spring, redbuds can be identified by their simple, smooth, round, heart-shaped leaves. The bark is also smooth and can range from dark grey-brown to black. Redbuds are pollinated by long-tongued bees such as blueberry bees and carpenter bees. Redbud's pink blooms are edible and can be enjoyed fresh or dried. Its fruit are brown peapods which can be eaten when roasted. This tree is in the fabaceae family, just like other legumes, peas, and beans.

Seven-son Flower *(Heptacodium miconioides)* This small tree is in the honeysuckle family and has bark that is papery thin and light tan in color. The leaves are dark green and heart-shaped, with deep veining. Clusters of seven white-petaled flowers develop in late summer, eventually changing to a vivid cherry hue. These flowers are rich in nectar and attract many pollinating insects including monarch butterflies.

Northern Catalpa *(Catalpa speciosa)* Catalpas have large, heart-shaped leaves that come in whorls of three, and long slender fruit pods. Catalpa's fragrant flower blossoms are white and resemble popcorn.

Shagbark hickory's distinctive flaky bark.

N. Kimball Ave. to N. Kedzie Ave.

Tree of Heaven *(Ailanthus altissima)* Found on the north side of the trail, just west of Spaulding Ave., this tree has bark that is smooth and light grey-green with lustrous tropical-looking branches. The leaves are long and pinnately compound on the stem, which emerge reddish bronze in color, becoming dark green as they grow. The leaflets are long and tapered at the ends. This tree is grown in Asia for its ability to host the ailanthus silk moth. It also served as the main subject matter of the novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith.

Shagbark Hickory *(Carya ovata)* Located on the north side of the trail between N. Sawyer Ave. and N. Kedzie Ave., these hickory trees have a distinctive loose-plated bark. They have alternate leaves that are pinnately compound, 8 to 14" long. Hickories have both male and female flowers, with long male catkins and female flowers in short spikes. These trees are wind pollinated. The fruit is a round nut with a thick ribbed husk that are green and then become brown to black when they ripen in October. The husks will split to reveal an edible nut, which are a treat for squirrels and birds. It has a rich golden fall color which, along with its shaggy bark, make it a very interesting specimen later in the year.

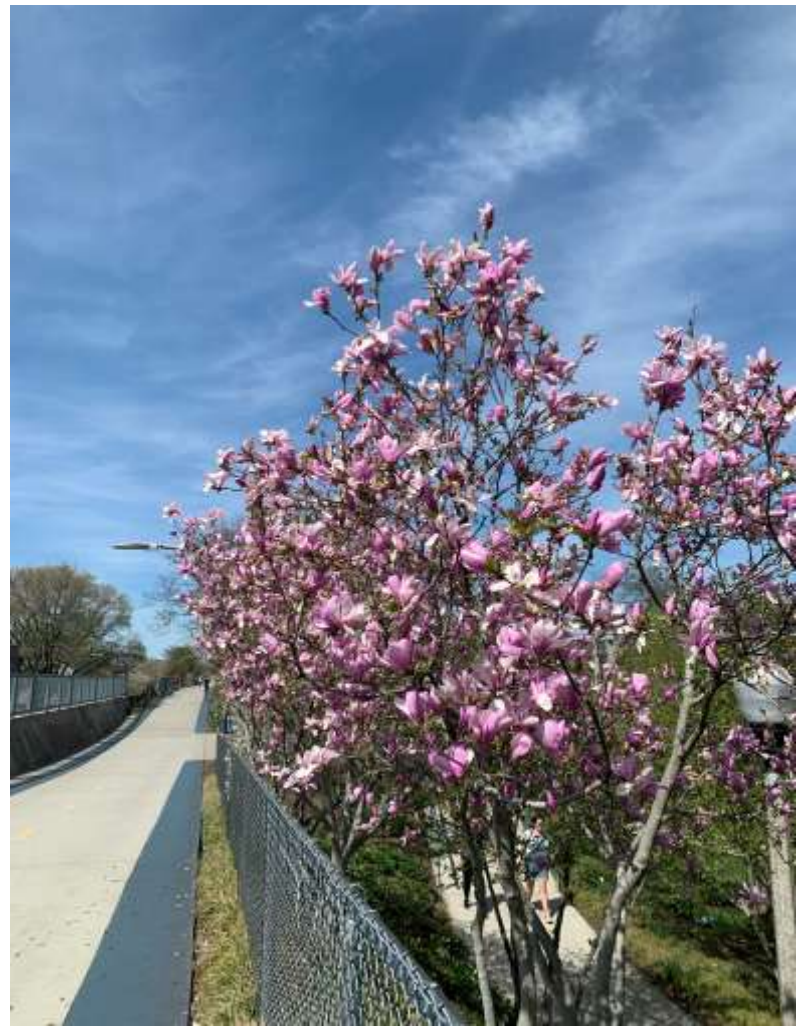
The wispy, fragrant blooms of the fringetree in late spring.

N. Kedzie Ave. to N. Albany Ave.

Espresso Kentucky Coffeetree *(Gymnocladus dioicus 'Espresso')* Located on the south side of the trail, just east of Kedzie Ave., this hardy tree has a tropical look, with large, doubly compound green leaves on coarse branches, with each bluish-green leaf measuring up to 3” long. The ‘Espresso’ variety of coffeetree does not produce the woody pods of the wild species, making it a less messy option for urban settings.

White Fringetree *(Chioanthus virginicus)* Droopy clusters of slightly fragrant creamy white flowers bloom in spring and become olive-like fruits which ripen to a dark bluish black in late summer. The leaves are wide, and spear shaped. Some of these can be found on the south side of the trail between Kedzie Ave. and N. Albany in what is called the Urban Savanna.

Merrill magnolia's white blossoms in early April.



Jane magnolia's large pink blooms in early April.

N. Albany Ave. to N. Whipple St.

Red Buckeye *(Aesculus pavia)* Located on the south side of the trail, just east of N. Albany Ave., the red buckeye is in the horse chestnut family. It has large, glossy leaves made up of 5 leaflets connected at a central point on a stem as long as the leaf. The red flowers develop in early spring, in clusters 6-10 inches long with stamens much longer than the top of the petals. It is normal for this tree to lose its leaves at the end of summer. The seeds and shoots are poisonous if ingested, and native Americans crushed these parts and put them in water to stupefy fish, making them easier to capture.

Merrill Loebneri Magnolia *(Magnolia x loebneri 'Merrill')* Fragrant, white star-shaped flowers with 10-15 petals appear in early spring before the bright green foliage forms. Cone-like fruits ripen to red in late summer. See these near N. Whipple St., along the path into Julia de Burgos Park.

Jane Magnolia *(Magnolia 'Jane')* Jane's large, pink, tulip-shaped flowers arrive in mid-spring and sometimes rebloom in mid-summer. These have an enchanting aroma and delicate shape. Located near N. Whipple St., on both sides of the trail.

Daydream smokebush at the N. Humboldt Blvd overlook., in July.

The smokebush's fluffy pink blooms in early August.

N. Humboldt Blvd. Overlook

Daydream Smokebush *(Cotinus coggygria x obovatus 'Daydream')* Found on both sides of the Humboldt Ave. overlook, smokebush gets its name from the billowy, hairy flowers that cover the plant in a pink haze throughout the summer. The leaves are a rich green, but its fall color ranges from bright oranges to deep burgundy hues. The fluffy flowers attract butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds. This is a great place to stop and have a sit while you enjoy the overlook's view of the tree canopy and green parkways of Humboldt Blvd.

Serviceberries beginning to ripen in mid-June.

N. Richmond St. to N. Francisco Ave.

Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry *(Amelanchier x grandiflora ('Autumn Brilliance')* Along the entirety of the trail, you will find over 450 serviceberry trees. Also known as juneberry, sugarplum, Saskatoon, shadbush, among other names. This variety offers plenty of interest all year starting in April, when the clusters of delicate, white five-petaled flowers begin to bloom. The flowers attract early pollinators and eventually ripen into small, round, red to purplish fruit that are delightfully edible and taste similar to blueberries. These juicy berries will attract a great number of birds and other wildlife. If you can manage to snag a basketful before the robins devour them, they are great for making jellies, muffins, pies, cookies, and other baked goods. 'Autumn Brilliance' is known for its stunning fall foliage which varies from golden to vermillion hues. The smooth, silvery-grey bark can have a Zen-like beauty in the winter.

Weeping forsythia's bright yellow flowers can be found along many of the street bridges of the trail in early spring.

Hophornbeam's papery hop-like sacks.

N. Francisco Ave. to N. Mozart Ave.

Kentucky Coffeetree *(Gymnocladus dioicus)* The coffeetree's genus name 'gymnocladus' means naked branch, referring to the tree's bare appearance for 6 months out of the year. The bark is tan or gray with deep fissures and a scaly surface. The leaves are alternate and bi-pinnately compound and emerge a bright pink before becoming bronze-green, smooth, shiny on top and pale underneath. The fruit are inside wide, hard-shelled pods, 5 to 10 inches in length. The beans may be roasted and used as a substitute for coffee, but raw seeds are toxic. Located just east of N. Francisco Ave.

Weeping Forsythia *(Forsythia suspensa var. seiboldii)* This fountain-like forsythia has graceful branches full of bright yellow flowers that are early bloomers, beginning in January and lasting until April. In summer, they are a dense bushy growth of dark green leaves on long delicate stems. Look for these along most the trail's bridges that cross over the streets and avenues below.

American Hophornbeam *(Ostrya virginiana)* On the south side of the Urban Savanna is a hophornbeam, named for its fruits that are enclosed in a papery sack that resembles hops. Also called ironwood, it is very resilient and has a high density, making it valued for manufacturing tool handles and fence posts.

Heritage oak's lime green acorns in late summer.

N. Mozart Ave. to N. Talman Ave.

Heritage Oak *(Quercus x macdanielii 'Clemons')* This oak, which is a cross between the English oak and bur oak, has an oval shape and a strong central trunk with branches that taper towards the crown. The leaves are deep green and glossy throughout the growing season and change to yellow and brown in the fall. Heritage oak can create an abundance of acorns, much to the delight of squirrels and birds. Located on the north side of the trail, between N. California Ave. and N. Fairfield. Ave.

Autumn Gold Ginkgo *(Ginkgo biloba 'Autumn Gold')* Ginkgos can be identified by their fan-shaped leaves which turn from green to a bold yellow in fall. This color transition will occur in every leaf simultaneously, overnight. The leaves will also drop all at once, creating a golden carpet on the ground. This variety of ginkgo is male and will not produce the questionably pungent fruits of the female ginkgo. Also called maidenhair tree, it is considered a "living fossil" and is one of the oldest tree species in the world. It is the only living connection between ferns and conifers.

Sumac berries in the winter.

The dazzling colors of the cutleaf staghorn sumac in the fall.

N. Rockwell St. to N. Western Ave.

Smooth Sumac *(Rhus glabra)* This sumac, native to North America, has long, compound leaves and smooth gray bark. Its most notable identifying feature is the large clusters of crimson berries that appear in June and remain on the plant throughout the winter. The leaves put on a colorful show in the fall. The berries are edible, but sour, and can be an addition to lemonade or can be dried, ground and used as a spice. All varieties of red-berried sumac are edible, but white-berried types should be avoided. Sumacs are widespread and can be seen along highways and railroad tracks. These are located on the north side of the sumac grove.

Cutleaf Staghorn Sumac (*Rhustyphina 'Laciniata')* The radical color-change of these sumacs make them a real showstopper in the fall. Their jagged-edged leaflets offer an interesting contrast to the smooth sumac on the opposite side of the trail. Staghorn sumac is named for its fuzzy red stems that curve upwards, resembling the antlers of a staghorn deer. These sumacs form a shady thicket for the trail's wildlife on the south side of the trail between N. Rockwell St. and N. Western Ave.

Regal Prince oaks towering above the trail between N. Leavitt St. and N. Hoyne Ave.

N. Milwaukee Ave. to N. Hoyne Ave.

Marmo Freeman Maple *(Acer x freemanii 'Marmo')* Near the Milwaukee Ave./Leavitt Ave. entrance ramps are these attractive maple cultivars that were developed at the Morton Arboretum in Niles, Illinois. It is a hybrid of red and silver maples, both native to the Chicago region. These are all male and non-seed bearing. The leaves become a bright red hue in early to mid-fall.

Regal Prince Oak *(Quercus x warei 'Long')* Located east of N. Leavitt St., are some stately, tall oaks with a narrow growth habit. The leaves are glossy with silvery undersides and transition from dark green to bright yellow in the fall. This variety is a hybrid of Upright English oak *(Quercus robur fastigiata)* and Swamp White oak *(Quercus bicolor)*. The first cultivar of this tree was located on the property of Earl Cully near Jacksonville, Illinois.

Princeton Sentry Ginkgo *(Ginkgo biloba 'Princeton Sentry')* This is another cultivar of all-male ginkgo. It has the distinctive two-lobed fan-shaped leaves, that transition from chartreuse to a uniform gold in October. Located on both sides of the trail just west of N. Hoyne Ave.

Hetz Wintergreen arborvitae near N. Damen Ave.

N. Damen Ave. to N. Winchester Ave.

Hetz Wintergreen Arborvitae *(Thuja occidentalis 'Hetz Wintergreen')* Just west of the N. Damen Ave. bridge, these cedars are tall and columnar, with foliage forming in flat sprays with scale-like leaves. This cedar stays green all year and does not take on the bronze winter color of other *Thuja* varieties.

American Sentry Linden *(Tilia americana 'McKSentry')* East of the Damen Arts Plaza, these lindens have large dark-green heart-shaped leaves and clusters of spice-scented yellow blooms that hang from tongue-shaped bracts in the early summer. The flowers attract all kinds of pollinators, especially bees, which produce highly sought after linden honey, known for its strong floral flavor and pale golden color. Their bark is an attractive silvery gray, often dotted with a line of holes from the sapsucker bird, which drinks the linden's sweet sap year after year. The wood of this tree is soft and workable and has a variety of uses from making ropes and baskets to furniture and musical instruments. The leaves, bark, and flowers have been used all over the world for medicinal purposes.

The glossy red color of the paperbark maple in late winter.

The leaves of the chinquapin oak in early May.

N. Winchester Ave. to N. Wood St.

Paperbark Maple *(Acer griseum)* This maple can be identified by its smooth, shiny red bark that peels in thin, papery layers that do not shed off the tree, creating a feathery birch-like appearance. The leaves are trifoliated and compound, dark green above and blue-green underneath. The fruit are small, paired samaras. These maples are native to central China but are now endangered there. A grove of these is located just east of N. Winchester Ave.

Bur Oak *(Quercus macrocarpa)* These native oaks produce the largest acorns of any oak in North America. The acorns, which have a noticeably hairy cap, can be eaten raw or cooked and are a food source for many wild animals. Their bark is grey and deeply furrowed and their leaves often have a rounded crown and pinched waist. They are slow growing but can live between 200-400 years!

Chinquapin Oak *(Quercus muehlenbergii)* On the south side of the trail, between N. Honore St. and N. Wood St., these oaks have glossy, coarsely toothed leaves that are yellow-green and veined, reminiscent of chestnut tree leaves. Their bark is very rough and shaggy. They have acorns with a bowl-shaped warty cap. These trees are native to the Chicago region and are naturally found near limestone outcroppings.

The pine grove, between N. Wood and N. Hermitage Ave.

N. Wood St. to N. Paulina St.

Swiss Stone Pine *(Pinus cembra 'Glauca')* This compact pine has long but stiff, 3" needles in bundles of five. Their 2 to 3" cones do not open on the tree and need three years to mature then drop in the spring. Its branches are dark, with scaly plates. These are usually found in the Swiss Alps, clinging to mountainsides and can withstand extreme conditions. They are a favorite of bonsai enthusiasts because of their slow growth and can be manipulated and pruned into beautiful shapes. These can be seen in the pine grove near N. Hermitage St.

Columnar Eastern White Pine *(Pinus strobus 'Fastigiata')* This pine's silky smooth, long needles give it a delicate appearance. The needles come in groups of five and the seed cones are slender, small, and often resinous. White pine has a strong central leader with greyish-white bark. These were once named the King Tree by European colonists because King George thought this was the best tree for shipbuilding and claimed them for the Royal Navy. This resulted in the Pine Tree Riot, one of the first conflicts between the British and the colonists that eventually led to the Revolutionary War. Today, it is still valuable for timber.

A quiet side path, between N. Paulina St. and N. Marshfield Ave.

N. Paulina St. to N. Marshfield Ave.

Commemoration Maple *(Acer saccharum 'Commemoration')* This kind of sugar maple has a rounded, upright form which is covered in leathery, dark leaves that are resistant to wind damage. Sugar maples have brilliant fall colors, a beautiful mix of reds, yellows, and oranges. Sugar maples are a source of maple syrup, maple sugar, and useful for making lumber for furniture and flooring. The leaf of the sugar maple is on the Canadian flag. Look for these on the side path north of trail near N. Marshfield Ave.

White Mulberry *(Morus alba)* Mulberry has a rough bark and leaves that are simple, alternate, heart-shaped and deeply veined. The leaves of this tree have been used in China since at least 2600 B.C. as the primary diet for silkworms used to make silk. Its sweet berries are edible and attract a variety of wildlife.

European Crabapple *(Malus sylvestris)* This tree has narrow leaves on dense, arching branches. The abundant fragrant flowers are white or pale pink, opening from crimson buds in the spring. The yellow fruit are about 1" in diameter, ripening in fall. The fruit is edible, mostly used in jellies or jams. Located north of the side path.

Blue spruce near N. Ashland Ave.

N. Marshfield Ave. to N. Ashland Ave.

Spring Grove Arborvitae *(Thuja plicata 'Spring Grove')* This is a variety of western red cedar that has a pyramidal shape. The aromatic foliage is dense and lush green all year round, providing shelter for birds and wildlife. The bark is reddish brown and furrowed. You can see one of these west of the bridge to the eastern observatory seating area.

Blue Spruce *(Picea pungens)* As the trail descends into Walsh Park, you will find this blue spruce near the sound barrier wall. This conifer has a perfect Christmas tree look to it. The evergreen's leaves are stiff and four-sided, and the bark is grey-brown with a cinnamon red undertone on its trunk.

Black Locust 'Chicago Blues' *(Robinia pseudoacacia 'Chicago Blues')* Found on the east side of the dog-friendly area, black locusts have dark grey deeply ridged bark and large pinnately compound leaves. Each leaflet has a tiny point at the end. Hanging clusters of fragrant white flowers bloom in late May. The fruit are flat brown pods, about 4" long. This is a cultivated form of the native black locust that was discovered by City of Chicago forester, Bob Benjamin.

Words and photography by Nandika Gervais, a resident of the Bucktown neighborhood of Chicago. Published by The Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail.