


trees to see

Stoneleigh  Natural
a natural garden Lands



Stoneleigh's magnificent trees

represent more than 150 years of landscape design and careful stewardship. Their leafy boughs nurture and comfort us, help clean our air, and provide the garden's architectural and ecological framework.

Many of Stoneleigh's largest trees were planted more than a century ago by some of the most influential landscape architects of their day, including the Olmsted Brothers firm. The listed specimens that are native to the eastern temperate forests and grasslands found in southeastern Pennsylvania are noted by this symbol: . They provide essential food and habitat for insects, birds, and other wildlife. Several trees at Stoneleigh are among the largest of their kind in the state.

Today, Stoneleigh is home to more than 450 different varieties of trees and is a showcase for native plants and sustainable landscape management. Since becoming a public garden in 2016, Stoneleigh has added hundreds of new trees to the landscape.



1

Fraser fir (*Abies fraseri* ‘Prostrata’)

Native to a very small area of the Appalachian Mountains, this evergreen conifer can grow to 50 feet in height. Stoneleigh’s specimen is a dwarf selection that typically matures at 10 feet tall. Although rare in nature, Fraser fir is the most popular commercially sold Christmas tree. The common name honors John Fraser, a Scottish botanist and plant collector who introduced this plant to Great Britain.

2

river birch (*Betula nigra*)

River birch has a special type of flower structure called a “catkin,” derived from the Old Dutch word for kitten, because the cylindrical flower clusters resemble a kitten’s tail. The native river birch is a host plant for Mourning Cloak and Dreamy Duskywing butterflies. In nature this tree is often found in moist soils but is widely adaptable. It can be easily identified by its cinnamon-colored, exfoliating bark and is a great choice for home gardens.

- Number of caterpillar species supported: 381
- #10 largest specimen in Pennsylvania

3

sawara cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera* ‘Squarrosa’)

This evergreen species is a tall, conical form of sawara cypress with bluish-green, moss-like needles. ‘Squarrosa’ cypress is a very old cultivar that originated in Japan and was brought to Europe in 1843. The rot-resistant wood is lemon scented with a rich, straight grain, and is used in Japan for building temples, palaces, and shrines.

- #2 largest specimen in Pennsylvania

4

golden larch (*Pseudolarix amabilis*)

Golden larch is a deciduous conifer native to eastern China. The specific epithet *amabilis* translates to “lovely” in Latin. It is a popular species for bonsai but also as an ornamental landscape tree with pale green needles that turn a striking golden-yellow in fall. In traditional Chinese medicine, golden larch is used as an antifungal remedy.

5

horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*)

Native to the Balkans region of Europe, this species is notable for its showy, white flowers that appear in late spring.

Interestingly, chestnuts and horse chestnuts are completely different trees. Chestnuts are in the beech family (Fagaceae) and produce edible nuts, while horse chestnuts and buckeyes are in the soapberry family (Sapindaceae) and produce poisonous nuts.

6

cucumber magnolia (*Magnolia acuminata*)

This tree is native to the eastern U.S. The species makes a great shade tree and is a fast grower, however the flowers are not showy. Unripe fruits resemble small cucumbers, but ripen to a dark red color.

Native peoples used cucumber magnolia bark for toothache pain and as a remedy for diarrhea. Settlers combined extracts from the green fruit with whisky for a fever medicine.

- #6 largest specimen in Pennsylvania

7

white fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus* ‘Emerald Knight’)

Considered a small tree or large shrub, this native species boasts fleecy, white flowers that hang from the branches like a late-spring snowfall.

In 2014, observers began noting infestations of emerald ash borer, an invasive and highly destructive beetle, on white fringetrees in areas where they grow alongside ash trees.

8

boxelder (*Acer negundo* ‘Kelly’s Gold’)

Boxelder is actually a maple tree native to North America. As its name implies, the tree attracts beautiful boxelder bugs, which feed on the seeds. Many birds eat the seeds as well; the Evening Grosbeak, in particular.

Native tribes use boxelder wood and sap for a variety of purposes, including flutes, bowls, drums, incense, and even a crystalized candy. Ancient flutes excavated from Arizona in 1931 were made from boxelder wood and date to 620-670 C.E. This vibrant selection produces striking gold leaves in the spring.

9

eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*)

This graceful evergreen is the state tree of Pennsylvania. A long-lived tree, the oldest recorded specimen was more than 550 years old.

Hemlock is susceptible to woolly adelgid, a tiny, sap-sucking insect accidentally introduced from Asia in the 1920s. This pest has killed most of the old-growth hemlocks in the Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah National Park, and has greatly affected eastern forests as well. Because there are more than 140 hemlocks at Stoneleigh, it is an excellent place to experience the character of a species once dominant in Appalachia.



– native to the eastern temperate forests and grasslands of southeastern Pennsylvania

10

black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*)

This native, deciduous tree has another common name, black tupelo, derived from the Creek Tribe words for “swamp tree.” Though it thrives in wet soils, the species can tolerate dry conditions. Although not showy, the flowers are an important nectar source for bees. Mammals and songbirds favor the fruits. The tree is prone to forming hollows that offer nesting places for raccoons, possums, and other wildlife. Native peoples used tupelo twigs to clean their teeth.

11

katsura tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum* ‘Pendulum’)

Katsura tree is native to Asia. Fossil records indicate that the species has existed for 1.8 million years. Until the Pleistocene Era, it grew across North America and Europe but became extinct in these areas after the Ice Age.

In autumn, the foliage turns yellow and has a scent reminiscent of caramel or brown sugar.

This is the last tree that Chara Haas planted before her death in 2012. Chara and her husband, John, lived at Stoneleigh for five decades. Their children donated the property to Natural Lands in 2016.

12

American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*)

Graceful American beech tree is notable for its silver-gray bark, shade tolerance, and abundant autumn nuts—an important source of food for raccoons, porcupines, squirrels, chipmunks, and black bear. Groves of old-growth specimens are a testament to the dense wood that often couldn’t be lumbered with axes.

- Number of caterpillar species supported: 134

13

silver linden (*Tilia tomentosa* ‘Petiolaris’)

Native to southwestern Asia, this species bears greenish-yellow flowers in the summer that—though not showy—have a beautiful scent. When this specimen is in bloom, you can smell it from the Welcome Kiosk!

The undersides of the leaves are silvery, hence the tree’s common name.



– native to the eastern temperate forests and grasslands of southeastern Pennsylvania

14

northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*)

Oaks are among the most important native plants for supporting insect and bird life. The red oak is one of the fastest growing and largest of the genus, topping out at 100 feet if grown in the open. These trees put on a spectacular fall display, as their common name implies. Unlike those of white oaks, red oak acorns are produced every other year and won't germinate without at least three months of temperatures below 40 degrees.

- Number of caterpillar species supported: 519

15

maidenhair tree (*Ginkgo biloba*)

Native to southern China, ginkgo is remarkably tolerant of a wide range of soil conditions, air pollution, and temperature. Considered to be a living fossil, it is the only surviving member of a group of ancient plants that inhabited the earth 150 million years ago. It features distinctive, fan-shaped leaves that turn bright yellow in fall.

Maidenhair tree is dioecious (separate male and female trees). Nurseries typically sell only male trees because female trees produce seeds encased in fleshy, fruit-like coverings that emit a foul odor in the fall. This specimen is a female.

16

London planetree (*Platanus x acerifolia*)

London planetree is a cross between American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) and Oriental planetree (*Platanus orientalis*), dating back to the 1640s. The tree was widely planted in London and other major European cities because of its perceived tolerance for urban pollution. The trend spread to America and, today, this hybrid is common in cities across the country.

The signature ornamental feature of this tree is its exfoliating bark. Non-showy flowers in spring give way to fuzzy fruit balls that ripen in October and persist into early winter. Each ball consists of many tiny, seed-like fruits that are wind dispersed in downy tufts as the balls gradually disintegrate.

17

European Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*)

Native to southern Europe and western Asia, Turkey oak is a large, deciduous tree in the white oak group. The acorns, which have a shaggy cap that covers half the nut, give this tree its alternate common name: moss-cupped oak. This particular tree is of special significance to the Haas family. It was transplanted by John and Chara Haas from their home in Haverford where they lived prior to moving into Stoneleigh in 1964.

- #2 largest specimen in Pennsylvania

18

Franklin tree (*Franklinia alatamaha*)

As a single trunk, Franklin tree can grow to 20 feet tall, but the species is more often seen growing as a shorter, multi-stemmed shrub. Large, white flowers bloom in late summer and have a scent similar to orange blossom or honeysuckle.

Botanists John and William Bartram, who had been appointed by King George III to collect and preserve botanical specimens, were introduced to the species along the Altamaha River in Georgia in 1765. They collected seeds and propagated them in their garden in Philadelphia, naming the tree in honor of their friend Benjamin Franklin.

Franklin tree has been extinct in the wild since 1803. It has been perpetuated in cultivation—every plant alive is derived from the seed collected by Bartram—for its attractive flowers and foliage, and because of its rarity.

- #5 largest specimen in Pennsylvania

19

southern catalpa (*Catalpa bignonioides*)

Southern catalpa is native to the Gulf Coast states but is now widely naturalized to much of the United States. Native peoples called them “catawba,” meaning “winged head,” likely in reference to the winged seeds that emerge from the tree’s long bean-like pods.

The species produces a bitter-tasting chemical compound that deters herbivores. Catalpa Sphinx moth caterpillars, however, not only tolerate these compounds, but thrive on them. In fact, the catalpa tree is the sole source of food for this species’ larvae. The caterpillars may defoliate a tree three times in one summer without killing it.

The Stoneleigh catalpa’s massive trunk measures 204 inches around and its canopy has a spread of 63 feet. The tree measures 82 feet tall, a remarkable height for a species that usually caps out at half that. Its height is even more remarkable, considering the Stoneleigh tree lost a huge section of its main trunk in a storm decades ago.

- Tied for #1 largest specimen in Pennsylvania



– native to the eastern temperate forests and grasslands of southeastern Pennsylvania

20

eastern arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*)

In 1536, French explorer Jacques Cartier was sailing up the St. Lawrence River looking for the famed Northwest Passage when scurvy sickened his crew. Indigenous Hurons saved them by teaching them to make a curative tea from boiled cuttings from this tree. Fittingly, the species' name translates to "tree of life" in Latin. The genus name, *Thuja*, is from a Greek word for perfume. Squeezing the evergreen leaves releases an aroma that is nothing less than nature's perfume.

Though often thought of as a species native to Pennsylvania, eastern arborvitae is actually indigenous to eastern and central Canada south to Northern Illinois, Ohio, and New York.

- Number of caterpillar species supported: 41
- #6 largest specimen in Pennsylvania

21

bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*)

Native to our region, bur oak is a large, long-lived tree, reaching up to 120 feet in height and 1,000 years in age. It thrives in a wide range of environmental conditions, including both dry and wet soils. It is the most fire resistant of the oaks thanks to its thick bark.

Macrocarpa translates to "large fruit," a reference to the size of the tree's acorns, which are an important food source for wildlife.

- Number of caterpillar species supported: 519

22

bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)

Bald cypress is a long-lived conifer that can reach heights of 150 feet. Although it looks like a needled evergreen, it drops its foliage in fall. It is native to the swamps and wet woods from Delaware to Florida and west to east Texas and Oklahoma.

The trunk is buttressed (flared) at the base, and often surrounded by distinctive, knobby "knees" that grow from the roots to protrude above the water's surface. Plant scientists are unsure of the purpose of the knees but they are thought to stabilize the trees in swampy soil.

23

European hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*)

Native to Europe and Asia Minor, this deciduous tree can withstand heavy pruning and shearing. Its wood is incredibly strong. Romans used the hornbeam to construct their chariots. Other traditional uses included coach wheels, cogs for windmills, and wood screws. In Old English, its name translates to "hard beam."

24

white ash (*Fraxinus americana*)

White ash is native to eastern North America and is the largest of the native ashes, typically growing to 80 feet tall. White ash is a valuable timber tree. Its wood is used for a variety of products like tool handles, oars, garden furniture, and sports equipment—including the Louisville Slugger baseball bats.

Native ash trees are becoming a rare sight due to an invasive beetle known as the emerald ash borer.

- Number of caterpillar species supported: 142

25

dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)

Dawn redwood is a fast-growing, deciduous conifer. Fossil records from across the northern hemisphere indicate the tree existed as many as 50 million years ago. However, it was not until 1941 that it first came to the attention of plant explorers. Seeds collected from the original site in China were made available to botanical gardens across the world. Today, the tree is considered a living fossil.

26

European beech (*Fagus sylvatica* ‘Pendula’)

European colonists brought this tree to America in the mid-1700s and it has been a popular ornamental shade tree ever since. European beech is primarily distinguished from American beech by its smaller size, darker gray bark, and wavy leaf margins.

‘Pendula’ is a weeping cultivar that typically grows to 50 feet tall.

27

English yew (*Taxus baccata*)

English yew is a long-lived (up to 3,000 years), evergreen tree native to Europe, southwestern Asia, and northern Africa. Although classified as a conifer, female yews do not have cones but instead produce red, berry-like fruits that birds feed on, thus spreading the plant to other locations.

All parts of this plant are poisonous if ingested.

28

sawara cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera*)

This species of false cypress is native to Japan where it is grown for timber.

- #2 largest specimen in Pennsylvania



– native to the eastern temperate forests and grasslands of southeastern Pennsylvania

Stoneleigh is part of a network of 42 nature preserves and one public garden under the care of Natural Lands, the region's oldest and largest land conservation nonprofit. Every acre preserved cleans the air we breathe, filters the water we drink, helps cool our planet, gives wildlife food and a home, and can bring joy to us all.

Natural Lands is dedicated to preserving and nurturing nature's wonders while creating opportunities for joy and discovery in the outdoors for everyone.

Natural Lands—which is member supported—has preserved more than 125,000 acres. Nearly five million people live within five miles of land under the organization's protection.

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