About the Scott Arboretum

The Scott Arboretum is a green oasis uniquely situated on the Swarthmore College campus. Over 300 acres create the College landscape and provide a display of the best ornamental plants recommended for Delaware Valley gardens. Established in 1929 as a living memorial to Arthur Hoyt Scott, Class of 1895, through a bequest from his family, the Arboretum continues to thrive today. There are over 4,000 different kinds of plants grown on the campus, selected for their outstanding ornamental qualities, ease of maintenance, and resistance to disease. Major plant collections include: flowering cherries, crabapples, hollies, lilacs, magnolias, tree peonies, rhododendrons, hydrangeas, conifers, vines, summer flowering shrubs, viburnums, and witchhazels.

Maps and specialized brochures on plants growing on the campus are available at the Arboretum office, which also houses a horticultural library. The Arboretum grounds are open from dawn to dusk year-round. Admission is free. The Arboretum is supported in part by the Associates of the Scott Arboretum, a membership group. Join today and enjoy an array of fun and educational events year-round. For additional information, call 610-328-8025, Monday to Friday, 8:30 - noon and 1:30 - 4:30.
Native Trees for the Home Landscape

Incorporating native trees into planting schemes enriches the biodiversity of our home landscapes and celebrates the natural heritage of our region. Every tree is native somewhere; this self-guided tour concerns trees native to eastern North America.

The trees showcased below have been selected by the Scott Arboretum as superb landscape plants for the Delaware Valley. Many provide multiple seasons of interest as well as food and shelter for wildlife. If properly sited, these native trees display pest and disease resistance, and need irrigation only during establishment and extreme drought. However, just because a tree is native does not mean it will do well in every landscape situation. Like any tree, natives should still be selected to match growing requirements with site conditions.

A. Magnolia virginiana var. australis ‘Henry Hicks’ (sweetbay magnolia)
Named at the Scott Arboretum for its dense habit and persistent semi-evergreen leaves. Sweetly scented white flowers appear from May to June and last sporadically until fall. Dark green leaves with silvery undersides. Grows 15-25 tall by 10-20 ft wide.

B. Chionanthus virginicus (fringetree)
An outstanding spring flowering tree, with a profusion of creamy, flaky flowers in May and black berries at summer’s end. Very adaptable; can be planted in acid soil, full sun or partial shade, and grows as a single- or multi-stemmed tree. Grows 12-20 ft.

C. Acer saccharum (sugar maple)
Majestically-shaped tree with striking fall display of vibrant reds, oranges and yellows. Prefers moist, acid soils; dislikes road salt. Grows to 75 ft.

D. Acer rubrum Red Sunset™ (red maple)
In early spring, the branches are blanketed with a profusion of tiny, red flowers; in fall, the foliage color ranges from bright yellow to orange and red. Tolerates shade, but displays best fall color in full sun. Excellent shade tree; grows to 60 ft.

E. Halesia diptera var. magniflora (two-winged silverbell)
Flowers later than the Carolina silverbell (above), with larger flowers. Plant both together for an extended period of bloom.

F. Nyssa sylvatica (black gum)
In autumn, the glossy, rich green summer leaves burst into brilliant shades of yellow, orange, scarlet, and purple. Blush black fruits attract the birds. Sports a lovely habit; ultimate size is 50-75 ft with a 20-30 ft spread.

H. Carya ovata (shagbark hickory)
Its common name stems from its distinctively shaggy bark. Produces a nut which is sweet and edible. Adaptable to many soils, but prefers full sun. A stately tree for large landscapes, growing 60-80 ft tall.

I. Franklinia alatamaha (franklinia)
Has not been found in the wild since its discovery in Georgia in 1765. Prized for its camellia-like white flowers with yellow centers in the late summer and early fall as well as its orange and red fall foliage. Best grown as a multi-stemmed tree with an open habit. Grows to 10-30 ft.

J. Ilex opaca (American holly)
Evergreen spiny leaves are dotted with striking red berries from October to March. Grows best in full sun, moist acid soils and where it is not too windy. Plant a male tree near female plants for berry production, and try heavy-fruiting cultivars like ‘Boyce Thompson Xanthocarpa’ (yellow berries) and ‘Old Heavy Berry’ (red berries).

K. Gymnocladus dioica (Kentucky coffee tree)
A handsome tree that is adaptable to urban conditions, drought, and a range of soils. The bark is dark brown with deep ridges, and the compound leaves are bluish-green. Slowly grows to 60 ft.

L. Carpinus caroliniana (American hornbeam)
In summer, pale yellow, drooping panicles of floral bracts contrast nicely with the dark green foliage. Fall color ranges from yellow to orange-red; sinewy stems and blue-gray bark provide subtle winter interest. Slowly grows to 20-30 ft.

M. Taxodium distichum (bald cypress)
Prized for its columnar habit, fine-textured light-green leaves, red-brown fibrous bark, buttressed trunk, and consistent deep orange fall color. Prefers acidic soil, but is adaptable to dry or wet areas (even standing water). Large tree growing 50-70 ft tall by 20-30 ft wide.

N. Chamaecyparis thyoides (Atlantic white cedar)
Evergreen with bluish-green foliage. Particularly useful in heavy clay soils and wet areas. Prefers full sun. Columnar in form, it grows 40-50 ft tall and 10-20 ft wide.

O. Betula nigra Heritage® (river birch)
Peeling bark provides year-round interest with layers of cream and salmon. Fast growing, it reaches 40-70 ft, can take sun to part shade and wet or dry soils, and is resistant to birch borer. Attractive as a single- or multi-stemmed tree.

P. Quercus rubra (red oak)
Lustrous dark green leaves turn reddish brown to bright red in fall. One of the fastest growing oaks; excellent as a lawn or street tree. Plant in full sun in acid soil, ultimate size is 60-75 ft.

Q. Quercus bicolor (swamp white oak)
Stately tree with a broad, open canopy. It has shiny, dark-green leaves with white undersides and a flaky, dusty-gray bark. Plant in full sun in acid soil. Grows 60-80 ft tall.

R. Celtis occidentalis (hackberry)
Exceptionally hardy tree that can tolerate harsh conditions. The gray bark has wart-like projections; glossy green leaves turn yellow in the fall. Birds and other wildlife are attracted to its dark purple fruits. Grows to 40-60 ft.

S. Oxycoccus arboreum (sourwood)
Lacy, drooping white flowers smoother the tree in June and July. Displays yellow, red and purple autumn color with contrasting silver-brown fruits. Grows to 25-30 ft.

T. Cedrus kennedea (American yellowwood)
Wisteria-like, fragrant clusters of white flowers are borne in spring. Deep green, compound leaves turn golden-yellow in fall. Smooth gray bark provides winter interest. Grows to 30-35 ft.