

The John Bartram Arboretum Kendal Tree Walk

(Formerly known as the Heiser Circle Tree Walk)



[The John Bartram Arboretum](#) (JBA) is named in honor of John Bartram (1699-1777) a Quaker and friend of Benjamin Franklin. He is sometimes referred to as the “first American botanist.” He traveled throughout the colonies collecting and cataloging plants. Some were exported to Europe in “Bartram’s Boxes,” including our signature tree, the tulip tree *Liriodendron tulipifera*. Many of the trees in the JBA were also planted in Bartram’s historic garden and listed in the 1783 [Bartram’s Broadside](#). They are shown

in bold type. Explore a portion of the JBA adjacent to the Heiser Community Center on this half-mile walk. Trees have common and Latin scientific or binomial names (genus, species) assigned per the International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi, and plants. Tree locations were mapped on the Lorain County spring 2023 aerial image using latitude and longitude coordinates. Look for identifying numbers at the base of trees.



John Bartram by Howard Pyle

1. The walk begins at the entrance to the Heiser Community Center with a [Franklin tree](#) (*Franklinia alatomahensis*). The species was discovered on October 1, 1765 by John Bartram and his son William near the Altamaha River in Georgia. It was named to honor Benjamin Franklin, Bartram’s friend. This species is now extinct in the wild. The grey bark has white vertical striations. The leaves, a key to [tree identification](#), are alternate, about 5 inches long, elongated, occasionally widest near the tip, with small teeth at the edge. Compare these leaves with others on the walk. Fragrant white blossoms produce seeds that require 12-14 months to mature. [Click](#) to read Joel T. Fry’s *Franklinia altamaha*, A History of That “Very Curious” Shrub.
2. Turn right on the sidewalk in front of Heiser and you will see a [Red Maple](#) (*Acer rubrum*) also known as the water, swamp, or soft maple. It is unhealthy. Note the scarred bark and leaf [chlorosis](#) which has many causes including nutrient deficiencies and soil compaction. The U.S. Forest Service ranks it as the most abundant deciduous tree in North America. Its name reflects the brilliant scarlet-red color of the leaves in the fall. The leaves grow on opposite sides of the twigs and are light green on the top and bluish-green or even hairy on the underside. The leaf stalks are reddish and about 4 inches long. The leaves have 3-5 lobes with a serrated edge. Although its sap can be used to produce maple syrup, the sugar maple (*A. saccharum*) is greatly preferred.
3. The [Honey Locust](#) (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) is a naturally occurring [thornless form](#) (*G. triacanthos* f. *inermis*). Like many other legumes, they may host root-dwelling bacteria that fix atmospheric nitrogen and fertilize the soil. Leaf morphology exhibits variations in a pinnate theme manifesting effects of age of the tree and solar exposure. Long twisted pods containing seeds and edible pulp were used by Native Americans as a sweetening agent; hence the name.
4. A [Gray Birch](#) (*Betula populifolia*). This small tree is native to eastern North America. The bark is smooth and greyish-white or chalky. They are a widely-grown ornamental tree, often grown in clusters.
5. A [Corkscrew Willow](#) (*Salix matsudana* ‘*Tortuosa*’) is growing on the shore of Center Pond. Its branches, twigs and leaves are twisted, hence alternative names of Contorted Willow and Dragon’s Claw Willow. Birds, particularly red winged blackbirds, frequently perch on the dead branches at the top.
6. An [Austrian or Black Pine](#) (*Pinus nigra*) is growing at the corner of the apartments. This airy species is one of the most common trees in the JBA. Many are in poor condition due to [diplodia tip blight](#), a fungal disease that attacks stressed conifers, particularly *P. nigra*. Others, like many trees planted when Kendal was developed, are planted too deeply. Follow the walkway to the garage to where it turns to the left.
7. A cluster of [River Birches](#) (*Betula nigra*) is growing right next to Farmer Pond. These heat-tolerant trees, native to Eastern United States, are also plentiful in the JBA and have reddish exfoliating bark that

darkens as the tree matures. Multiple trunks are common.

8. Behind the garage there is a group of three large [Norway Spruces](#) (*Picea abies*). The branchlets hang downward, the needles grow singly and the cones are the largest of all of the spruces. Cones may reach seven inches in length. Norway spruces are traditional Christmas trees.

9. As you cross the Troll Bridge look for a [Common Pawpaw](#) (*Asimina triloba*) on your right. Large, simple leaves end with drip tips, a feature that is more characteristic of plants in tropical rainforests. The edible fruits are the largest among trees endemic to the United States. The bark and seeds contain [annonacin](#), a neurotoxin.

10. A [European Beech](#) (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Tricolor') sapling is at the end of the walkway. It is one of many commemorative trees on the Campus. Each leaf is unique. Irregular purple-pink zones are surrounded by a lighter pink. Its seeds are small tri-cornered nuts (beechnuts). They are edible and a favorite of wildlife.

11. Behind it is a lacy [Dawn Redwood](#) (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*). It was dubbed a "living fossil" when examples were found growing in China. It was first known to paleobotanists who were studying fossilized remains from the [Arcto-Tertiary Geoflora](#) group that are found in Alaskan national parks. Members of the group were common in the warmer times that ended several tens of million years ago. This deciduous conifer is one of three genera known collectively as redwoods (others are the coastal redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens*, and the giant sequoia of California, *Sequoiadendron giganteum*).

12. Return to Heiser Circle and the ferry. On the island look for the columnar Shawnee Brave® [Bald Cypress](#) (*Taxodium distichum* 'Mickelson'). The native tree has many other names and grows well under varied conditions. It prefers swamps in the southeastern U.S. It is closely related to the Dawn Redwood. Its needles turn a russet-red color in the fall and are replaced by lacy new foliage in the spring.

13. On the southern end of the island you will find a Wildfire [Tupelo](#) (*Nyssa sylvatica* 'Wildfire') sapling hiding among nearby plants. In the spring its new leaves are bright red. They mature to a dark, glossy green. In the fall, the leaves put on quite a display as they turn to colors that range from yellow-orange to purple-red. Return to the "mainland."

14. A [Red Horse-chestnut](#) (*Aesculus x carnea*) stands near the faux stones at the top of the cascade. Red flowers in the spring attract hummingbirds and bees. Messy seedpods discourage its use in landscape plantings. The Ohio Buckeye, *A. glabra*, is our state tree and differs from the horse-chestnut.

15. A group of [Pin Oaks](#) (*Quercus palustris*) stands just to the west. The distinctive canopy has branches that point upward at the top, at right angles at mid-tree, and droop down at the bottom. Leaves have between five and seven deeply-cut lobes tipped with spiny teeth or bristles. *Quercus* is a large genus and bristles, or long pointed teeth, are a feature of all of the oaks in the red section of the genus.

16. A young [Northern Red Oak](#) (*Quercus rubra*) is growing on the left side of the path leading away from the circle. Mature bark has many ridges with what look like shiny stripes down the middle. The leaves have between 7 and 9 lobes and end with long pointed teeth or bristles. The leaf-ends of the white oak section of the genus are rounded. Visit the Oaks at Kendal page on the Arboretum web site.

17. Across the road is a tall thin [Fastigate](#) or Columnar Oak whose exact origin is uncertain (*Quercus sp.*). It is in the red section of the *Quercus* genus.

18. Next is a cluster of five trees including an [American sycamore](#) (*Plantanus occidentalis*). It is native to large portions of the United States. When named by Carl Linneaus, he noted its location in the western hemisphere in his choice of a species name. Its distinctive bark is mottled and peels off, or exfoliates, in large sheets. The other trees in the cluster belong to the genus *Plantanus* but are hybrids and [cultivars](#).

19. On the north side of the Education Building there is a [Bur Oak](#) (*Quercus macrocarpa*), also known as a Burr Oak. Its acorns are the largest of any North American oak, hence its species name. The cup has overlapping scales with rough margins that cover much of the acorn. The tree honors the contributions to the JBA made by Urban Forester Alan Siewert, now retired from the Ohio Division of Natural Resources.

20. Finally, arrive at a [Tulip Tree](#) (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) donated by the Arboretum Committee in the fall of 2018 to recognize the 25th anniversary of the founding of Kendal at Oberlin. This is a fitting end to this walk as it is the signature tree of [The John Bartram Arboretum](#) at Kendal at Oberlin.