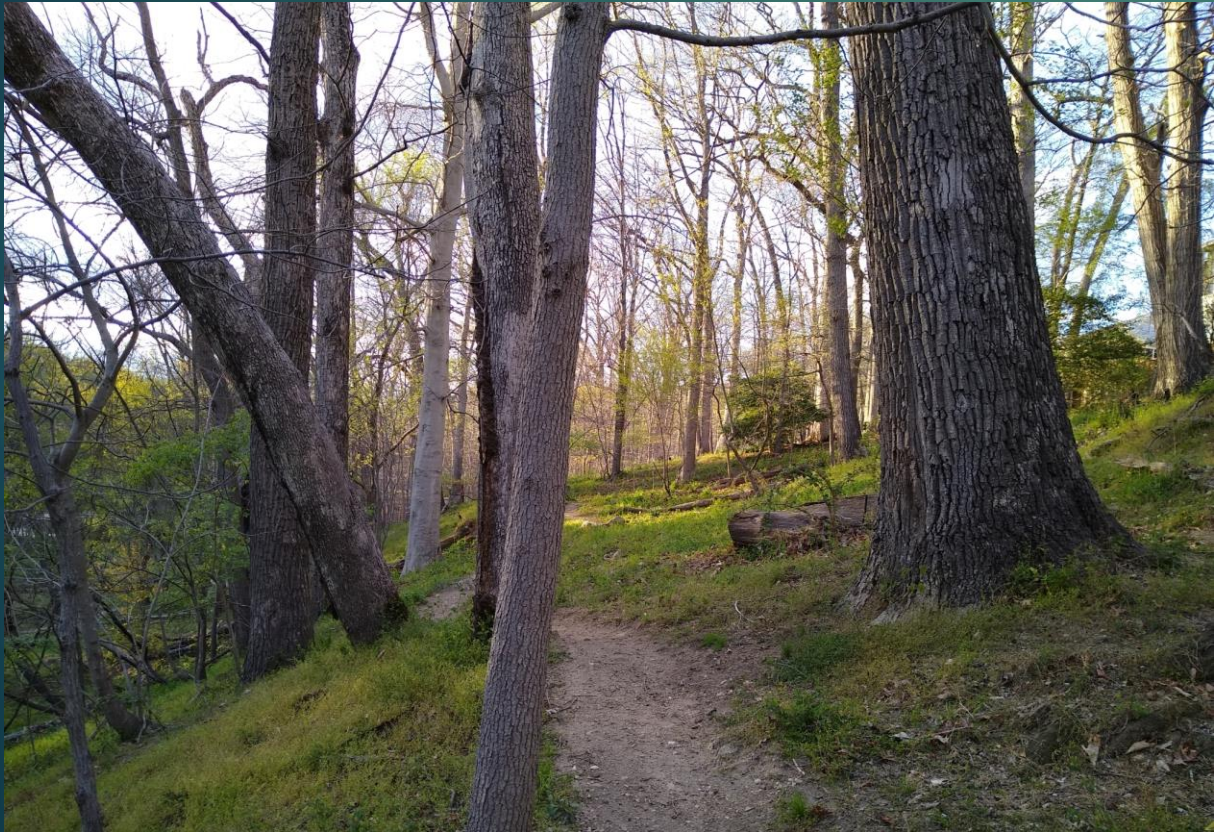


# Identifying Sligo's Trees by Bark

February 22, 2023

Michael Wilpers

Chair of Natural History, Friends of Sligo Creek





# Sequence

- ~ Three easy trees to ID
- ~ Six categories of bark
- ~ 25 tree species
- ~ “Intermission” features
- ~ Additional resources

Almost all photos taken in Sligo



River Birch





Smooth



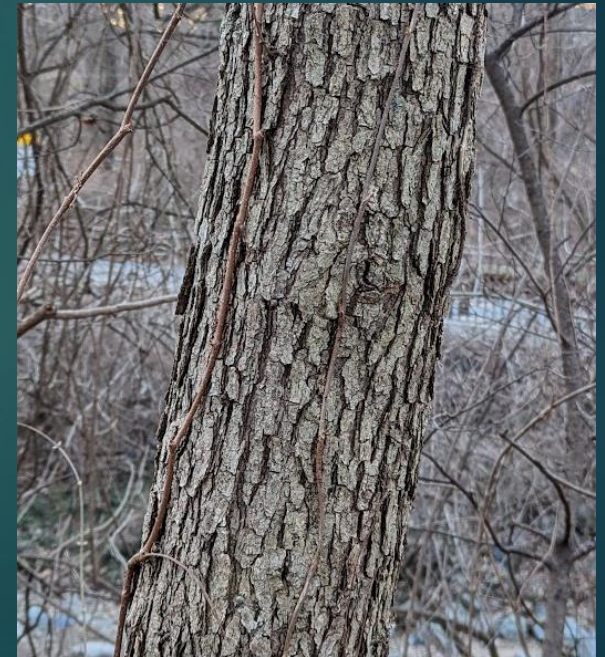
Thin narrow strips



Shallow  
ridges



Broken irregular  
pieces



Flaky



Chunky  
ridges

## BARK TEXTURES

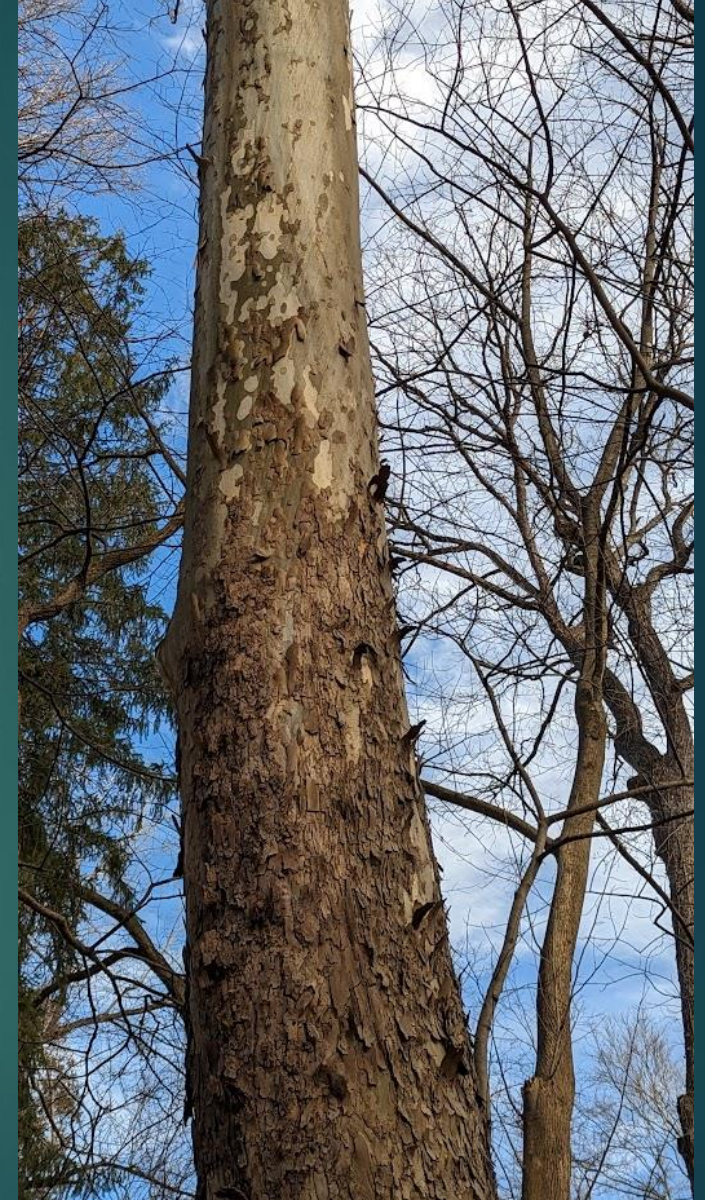


# Three Easy and Common Trees

American Beech



Northern Red Oak



American Sycamore



## American Beech

*Fagus grandifolia*

Smooth gray bark

Fairly common in Sligo except from  
Dennis to Forest Glen

Moist wooded slopes

Holds onto dead leaves like oaks





# American Beech

Long pointed buds

Thin bark is not fire resistant.  
Suppression of fire may lead to dominance

Green  
photosynthetic  
cork skin:  
Sunlight  
penetrates  
thin bark.





# Northern Red Oak

*Quercus rubra*  
(formerly *Q. borealis*)

Flattened, silver-gray ridges

“Ski slopes”

Fairly common in all  
Sligo sections

Moist slopes and stream  
banks





# American Sycamore

*Platanus occidentalis*

Common in all of Sligo on floodplains





# Native Plant Inventory of Sligo 2003

old.fosc.org

Plant & Animals – Plants – 2003 Inventory

ara Asia Restauran... 20120414165518\_5... Wilpers, Michael -... Gmail YouTube Maps Top 4 Ways to Capt... Constant Contact :... Amazon.com – Onli... Booking.com McAfee Sec

## Plant Inventory Search

Common Name	Scientific Name	Occurrence	Sections Found <a href="#">MAP</a>	Habitat	Remarks <input type="text" value="KEY"/>
<a href="#">White Oak</a>	<i>Quercus alba</i>	common	all	moist or dry forest	Maryland State Tree. T.
<a href="#">Post Oak</a>	<i>Quercus stellata</i>	uncommon	9,8,7,1P,	dry open canopy oak forest	Bark resembles white oak; leaves quite distinct. T. (A)
<a href="#">Swamp White Oak</a>	<i>Quercus bicolor</i>	very rare	5,	Streambank	one very old tree.T.(A) Click <a href="#">here</a> for photos.
<a href="#">Chinquapin Oak</a>	<i>Quercus muhlenbergii</i>	very rare	8,7,	moist/dry open canopy oak forest	A few young trees observed. T. (A)
<a href="#">Chestnut Oak</a>	<i>Quercus prinus</i>	uncommon	2,1P,	dry rocky slopes with heaths	Restricted to Sligo gorge. T.
<a href="#">Red Oak</a> ✓	<i>Quercus rubra</i>	fairly common	all	moist slopes and stream banks	With beech and other oaks; buttressed trunk base. T.
<a href="#">Black Oak</a>	<i>Quercus velutina</i>	fairly common	all	dry forest on slopes	Resembles red oak; leaves leathery & glossy. T.
<a href="#">Pin Oak</a>	<i>Quercus palustris</i>	fairly common	9,8,7,6,5,4,1P,1CP,	floodplain and wetlands	Small leaves and acorns; downswept lower limbs. T.
<a href="#">Scarlet Oak</a>	<i>Quercus coccinea</i>	fairly common	9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1P,	dry slopes with other oaks	Widespread but nowhere abundant. T.
<a href="#">Spanish or Southern Red Oak</a>	<i>Quercus falcata</i>	fairly common	all	dry slopes with other oaks	Distinctively shaped leaves. T. (A)
<a href="#">Black-jack Oak</a>	<i>Quercus marilandica</i>	very rare	3,2,1P,	dry upland ridgetop	Found in watershed outside Park. T.
<a href="#">Shingle Oak</a>	<i>Quercus imbricaria</i>	uncommon	9,8,7,6,5,4,3,	moist forest; slopes and floodplain	Leaves similar to willow oak but larger. T.
<a href="#">Willow Oak</a>	<i>Quercus phellos</i>	fairly common	8,6,5,4,3,2,1P,1CP,	moist forest; slopes and floodplain	Native downstream of NH Ave. but naturalized upstream of NH in Piedmont. T.



## Checklist of the Native Trees of Sligo Creek Park

### Cypress Family

Eastern Redcedar . . . . U/1-2,5-9

### Pine Family

Pitch Pine . . . . . R/1C,5,7  
Shortleaf/Yellow Pine . . R/6,8,9  
Virginia Pine . . . . . FC/1-2, 4-9  
Eastern Hemlock . . . . . VR/2

### Willow Family

Black Willow . . . . . U/1,5-9  
Big-tooth Aspen . . . . . R/8  
East. Cottonwood . . U/1C,2,4,6,9

### Walnut Family

Black Walnut . . . . . FC/A  
Bitternut Hickory . . . . R/1C  
Mockernut Hickory . . . . FC/A  
Pignut Hickory . . . . . FC/A

### Birch Family

American Hornbeam<sup>a</sup> . . . . FC/A  
River Birch . . . . . FC/1,3-7,9  
Smooth Alder . . . . . U/3,5-6,8

### Beech Family

American Beech . . . . FC/1-6,8-9  
American Chestnut . R/1P,3,5,7-8  
Allegheny Chinkapin<sup>b</sup> . VR/1P,8  
White Oak . . . . . C/A  
Post Oak . . . . . U/1P, 7-9  
Swamp White Oak . . . . VR/5  
Chinkapin Oak . . . . . VR/7-8  
Chestnut Oak . . . . . U/1P-2  
Red Oak . . . . . FC/A  
Black Oak . . . . . FC/A

Pin Oak . . . . . FC/1,4-9  
Scarlet Oak . . . . . FC/1P-9  
Southern Red Oak<sup>c</sup> . . . . FC/A  
Black-jack Oak . . . . . VR/1P-3  
Shingle Oak . . . . . U/3-9  
Willow Oak . . . . . FC/1-6,8

### Elm Family

American Elm . . . . . C/A  
Hackberry . . . . . U/5-7

### Mulberry Family

Red Mulberry . . . . . R/3,6

### Magnolia Family

Umbrella Magnolia . . . . R/3,8  
Tulip Tree . . . . . C/A

### Custard-apple Family

Pawpaw . . . . . U-R/1C,2-3,6,8

### Laurel Family

Sassafras . . . . . C/A

### Witch-Hazel Family

Witch-Hazel<sup>d</sup> . . . . . U-FC/1P-5  
Sweet Gum . . . . . U/1C,5,7,9

### Plane-tree Family

Sycamore . . . . . C/A

### Rose Family

Downy Juneberry<sup>d</sup> . . U-FC/1P-4,  
6-9  
Smooth Juneberry<sup>d</sup> . . . . VR/2  
Black Cherry . . . . . C/A

common name . . . . abundance/locations

ABUNDANCE: C=common FC=fairly common U=uncommon R=rare VR=very rare

— over —

### Legume Family

Redbud . . . . . FC/1P,4-8  
Black Locust . . . . . C/A

### Cashew Family

Smooth Sumac<sup>e</sup> . . . . . R/1P,6  
Winged Sumac<sup>e</sup> . . . . . R/1P,6,9  
Staghorn Sumac . . U-R/1P,5-6,8

### Holly Family

American Holly<sup>f</sup> . . . . . FC/A

### Maple Family

Red Maple . . . . . C/A  
Silver Maple . . . . . FC/A  
Box Elder . . . . . C/A

### Sour Gum/Tupelo Family

Black Gum<sup>g</sup> . . . . . FC/A

### Ginseng Family

Hercules-club . . . . . U/1P-2,6-8

### Dogwood Family

Flowering Dogwood . . . . C/A

### Ebony Family

Persimmon . . . . . FC/1-2, 5-9

### Olive Family

White Ash . . . . . FC/A  
Green Ash . . . . . FC/A  
Fringe-tree . . . . . R/1P-2,8-9

### Honeysuckle Family

Black Haw<sup>h</sup> . . . . . FC/A

### LOCATIONS

A = all of Sligo from East-West  
Hwy through Kemp Mill

1 = East-West Hwy to New  
Hampshire (NH) Ave  
1C = East-West thru Pepco  
corridor  
1P = Pepco corridor to NH Ave  
2 = New Hampshire to Maple Ave  
3 = Maple to Piney Branch Rd  
4 = Piney Branch to Wayne Ave  
5 = Wayne to Colesville Rd (Rt 29)  
6 = Colesville to Forest Glen Rd  
7 = Forest Glen to Dennis Ave  
8 = Dennis to University Blvd  
9 = above University (Kemp Mill)

### NOTES

<sup>a</sup> can be a tree or shrub

<sup>a</sup> *C. caroliniana*, aka Ironwood,  
Muscle tree

<sup>b</sup> aka Eastern Chinkapin (Chinquapin)

<sup>c</sup> aka Spanish Oak

<sup>d</sup> aka Serviceberry, Shadbush

<sup>e</sup> aka Shining Sumac

<sup>f</sup> *N. sylvatica*, aka Sour Gum, Tupelo

<sup>g</sup> *V. prunifolium*, aka Smooth  
Blackhaw

SOURCE: Adapted from John Parrish and RG Steinman, *Native Plants of the Sligo Creek Watershed* [Maryland], 2003, at [www.fosc.org](http://www.fosc.org), under "Plants and Animals."

While hosting an abundance of native trees, Sligo also suffers from the spread of invasive non-native species and ornamental varieties, such as Bradford Pear, Norway Maple, Tree of Heaven, Princess Tree, White Mulberry and Mimosa. Please don't plant them in your yards.

Checklist produced by the Natural History Committee of the Friends of Sligo Creek. We hope it helps you get better acquainted with the trees around you in the Park. Send feedback to [naturalhistory@fosc.org](mailto:naturalhistory@fosc.org).  
2009



# Smooth Bark



American Beech

Ironwood



American Sycamore

Red Maple





# Smooth Bark no. 2

## Ironwood

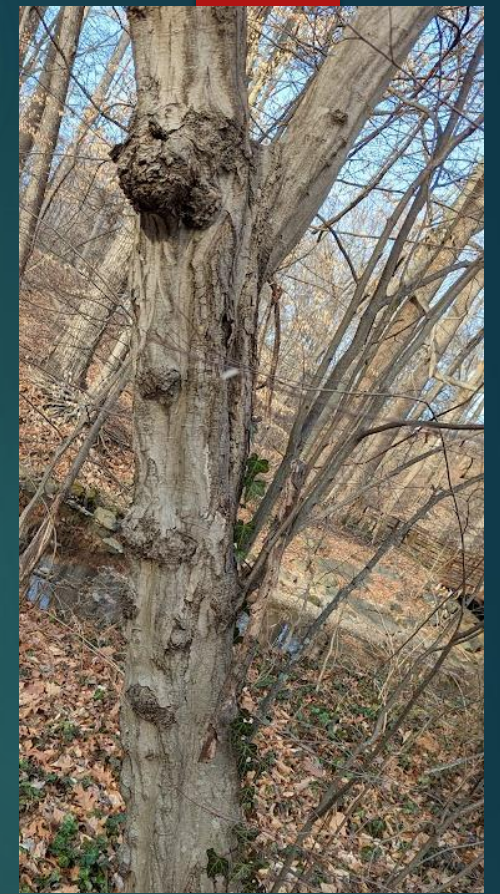
*Carpinus caroliniana*

(Musclewood,  
American Hornbeam)

Sinewy, muscular

Fairly common in all of  
Sligo

Moist woodlands and  
floodplains





# Smooth Bark no. 3

## Red Maple

*Acer rubrum*

Common in all of  
Sligo

Rough at the  
base, smooth  
towards the top





# Smooth Bark no. 4

## **American Sycamore**

*Platanus occidentalis*

Most massive tree  
east of the Rockies

Like most riverine  
species, seeds are  
dispersed by wind  
(willows, birches,  
cottonwood).





# Flaky Bark



American  
Sycamore  
(lower trunk only)



White Oak



Silver  
Maple



Black  
Cherry



River  
Birch



# Flaky Bark no. 1

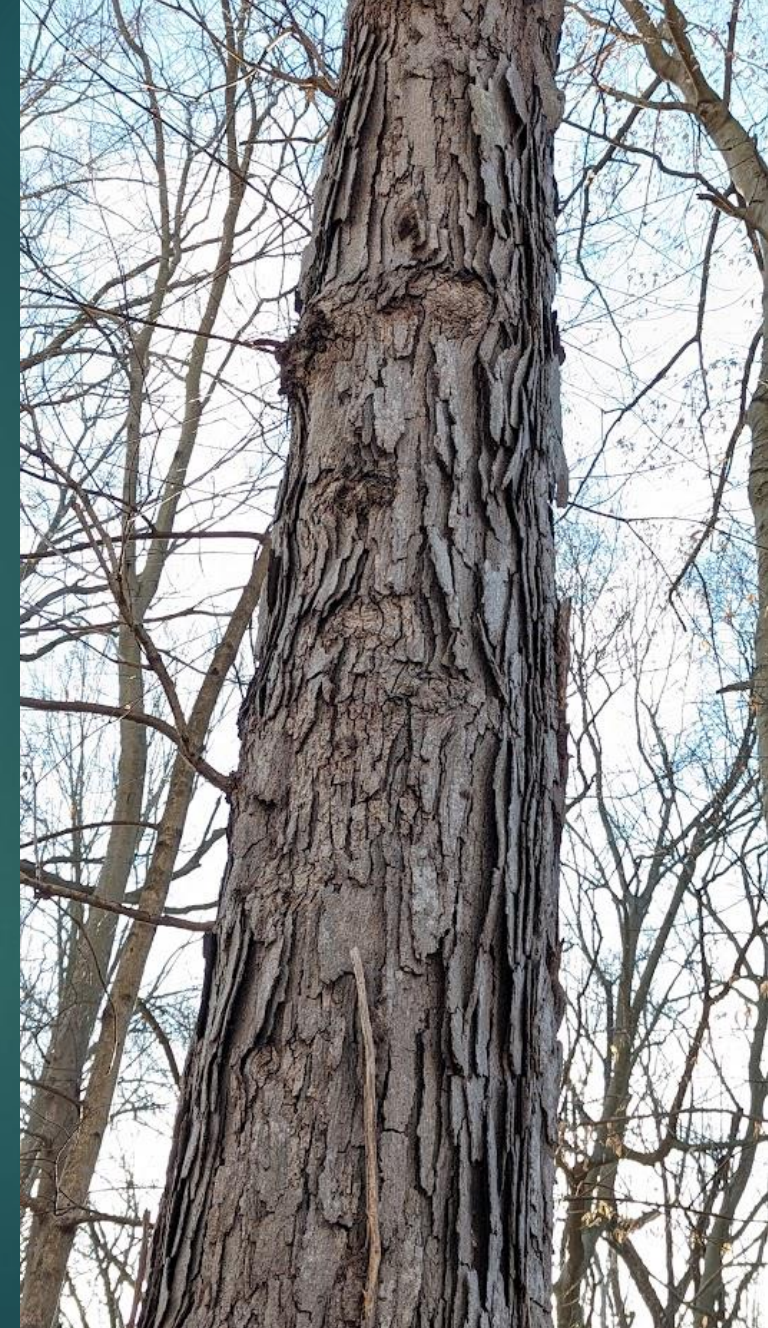
## White Oak

*Quercus alba*

Common throughout  
Sligo

Moist and dry  
woodlands; adaptable

Crevices used by  
overwintering insects





# Flaky Bark no. 2

## Silver Maple

*Acer saccharinum*

Fairly common in all  
Sligo

Floodplains and  
stream banks where  
its look-alike, White  
Oak, is not common





# Flaky Bark no. 3

**Black Cherry**  
*Prunus serotina*

Lenticels (horizontal lines) usually visible

“Melting candle”

Common in all of Sligo

Found almost everywhere except wetlands





# Flaky Bark no. 4

## River Birch

*Betula nigra*

Fairly common  
except NH to  
Maple & Dennis to  
Univ.

Floodplains &  
stream banks

Some planted by  
Parks





## Flaky Bark no. 5

**American Sycamore**  
*Platanus occidentalis*

Only on the lower trunk

Common in all Sligo

Floodplains





# Quiz: Which is White Oak?

A



B

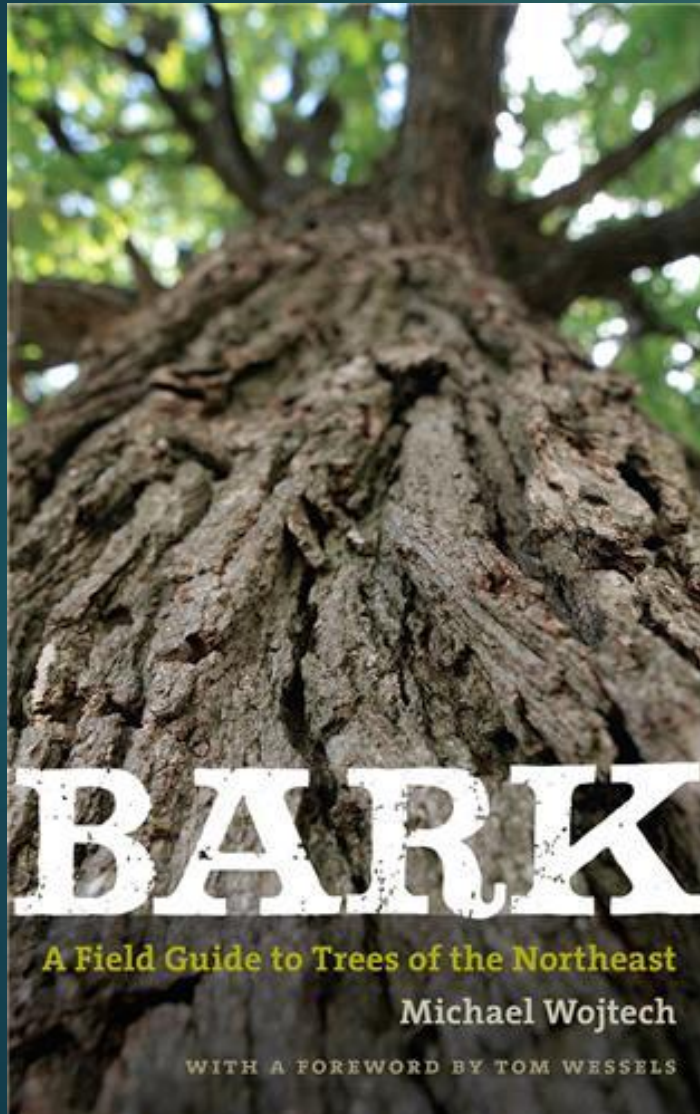



C






# Bark Resources





## Know Your Trees

Discover and marvel with naturalist  
Michael Wojtech



[Home](#) [Books ▾](#) [Programs ▾](#) [Recent Work](#) [About Michael](#) [Contact](#)


### Know Your Trees

Are you curious about trees? Perhaps you want to identify them by species, or wonder why they grow with such a variety of bark textures, leaf shapes, winter bud characteristics, branching patterns, and other traits. Maybe you simply enjoy looking at them.

Get to Know Your Trees with Naturalist [Michael Wojtech](#). Through his presentations, workshops, books, articles, photos, and illustrations, you will learn to notice the distinct characteristics of each species and discover the functional advantages they provide as trees grow, reproduce, and interact with their environment.

As you deepen your perceptions of trees, celebrate their beauty and enjoy the creative expressions that they inspire. You will become better connected with the landscape where you live. And with yourself.

### About Michael Wojtech



... I write, photograph, illustrate, and present programs about the structure, growth processes, and ecology of trees...

My greatest inspiration flows from the sense of wonder, awe, and the recognition of beauty that result from these investigations and my desire to share these experiences with others...

[Read More...](#)



# Small Irregular Blocks



Flowering Dogwood



Black Gum



American  
Persimmon



Southern Red Oak



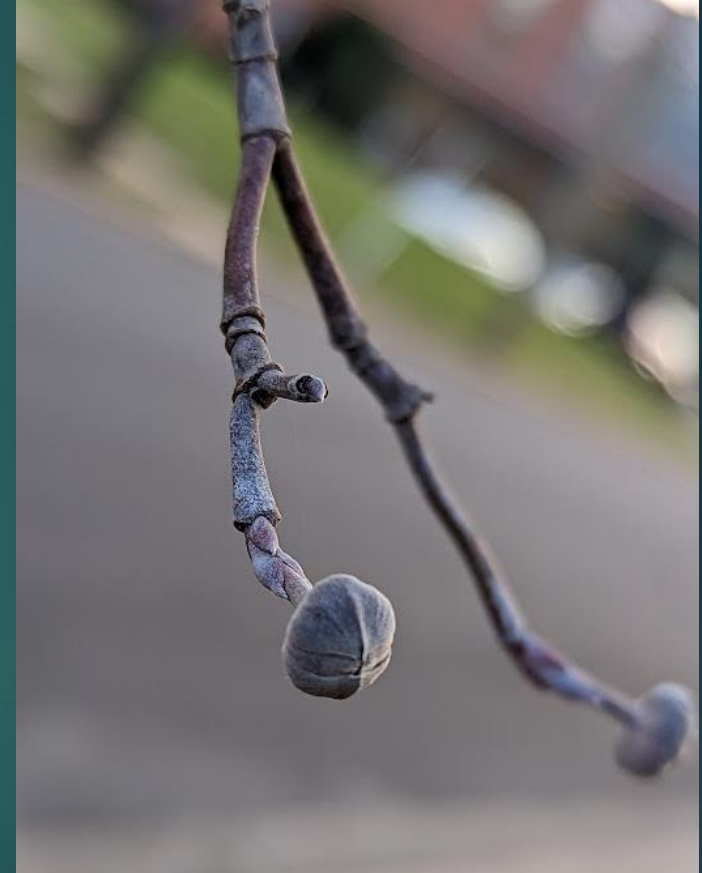
# Small Blocks no. 1

## Flowering Dogwood

*Cornus florida*

Common throughout Sligo

Woodland understory





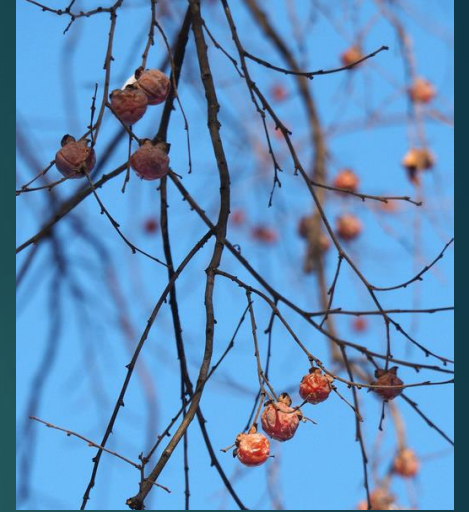
# Small Blocks no. 2

## American Persimmon

*Diospyros virginiana*

Fairly common in  
Sligo except from  
Maple to Wayne

Usually in floodplains



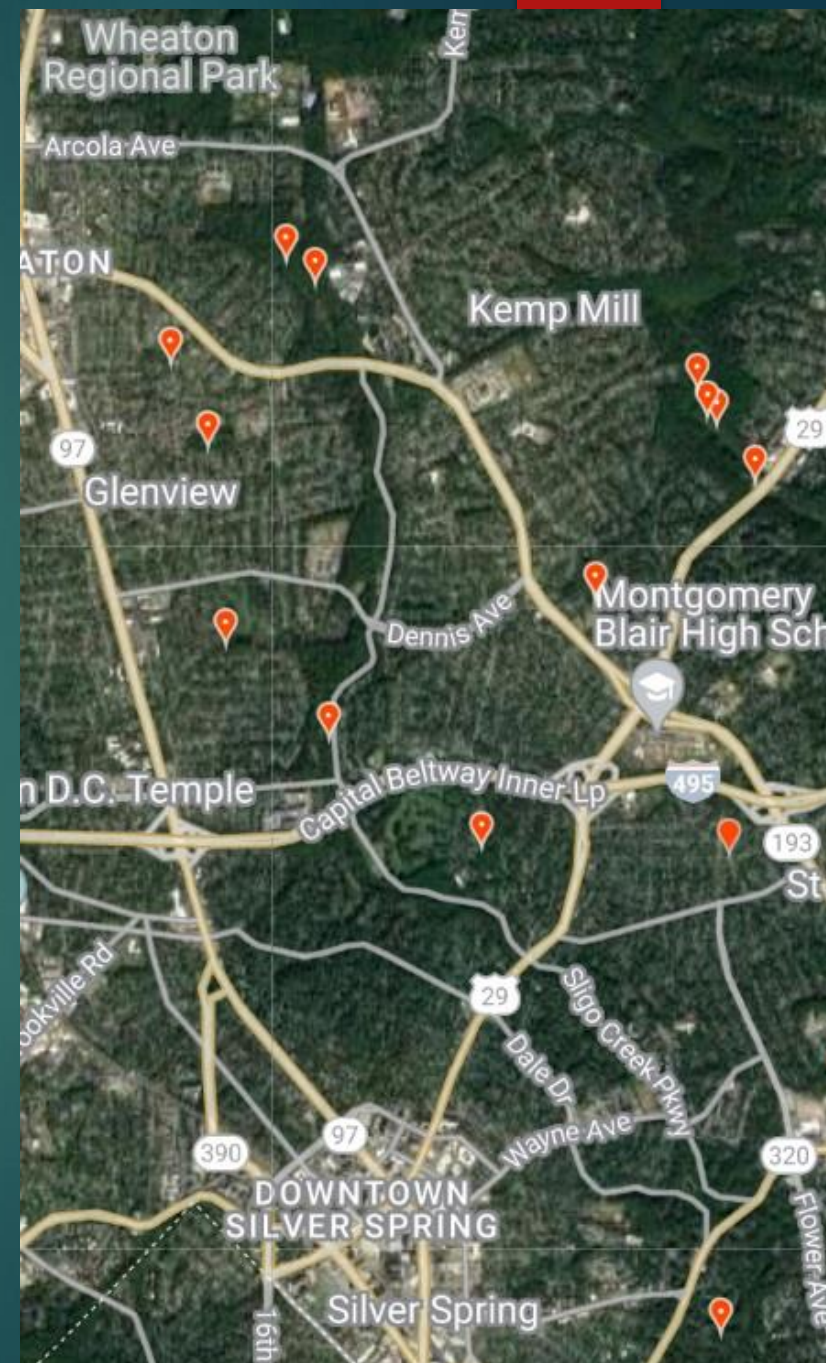
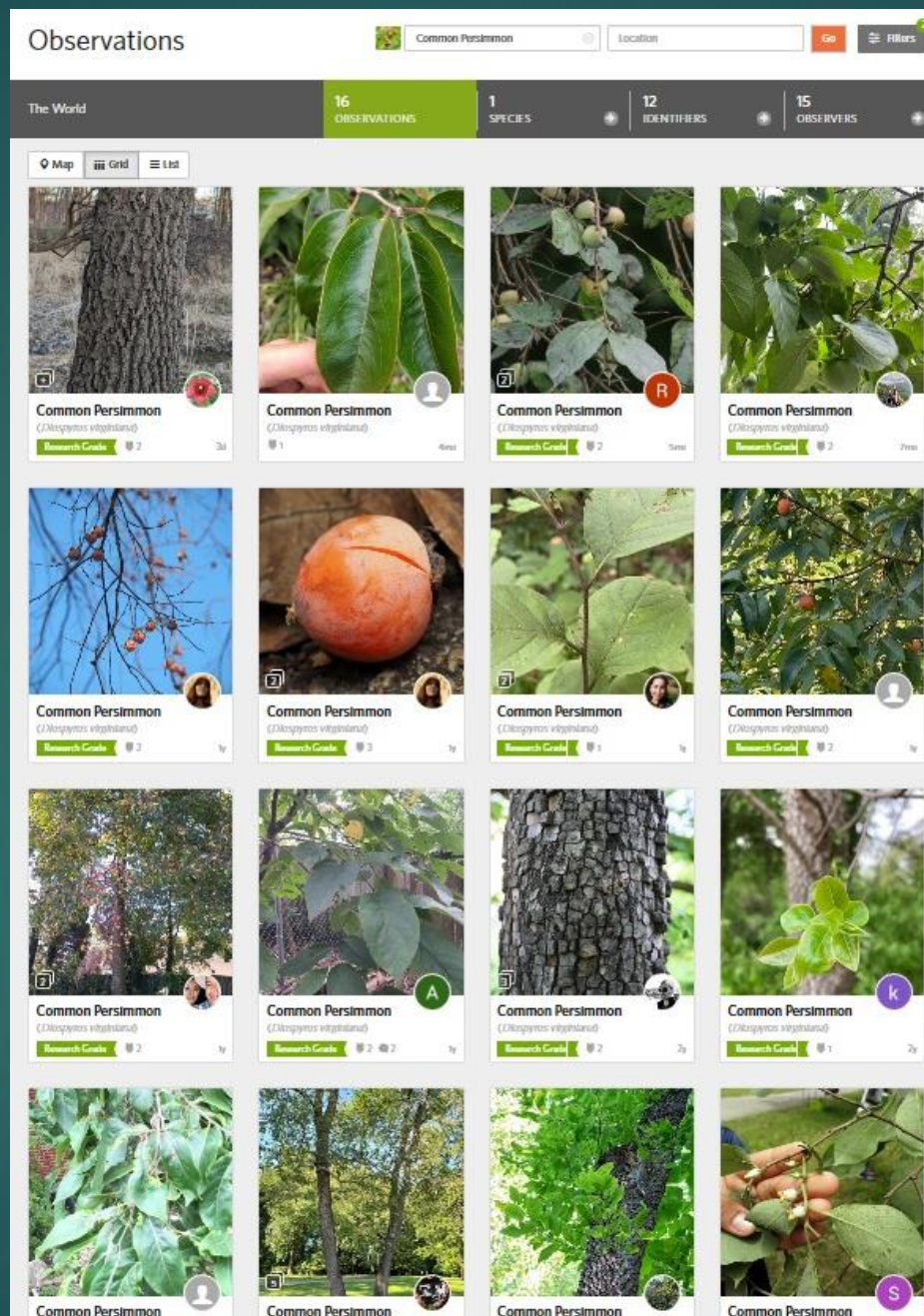
Right four photos: S. Davies, K.  
Schulz, maragay



# Persimmon in Sligo

2003 Parrish  
inventory:  
Fairly common,  
except Maple  
to Wayne

iNaturalist:  
Only 9  
locations, 16  
observations





# Small Blocks no. 3

## **Black Gum**

*Nyssa sylvatica*

(aka Black Tupelo,  
Sourgum)

Fairly common  
throughout Sligo





# Black Gum

Branches at 90-degrees

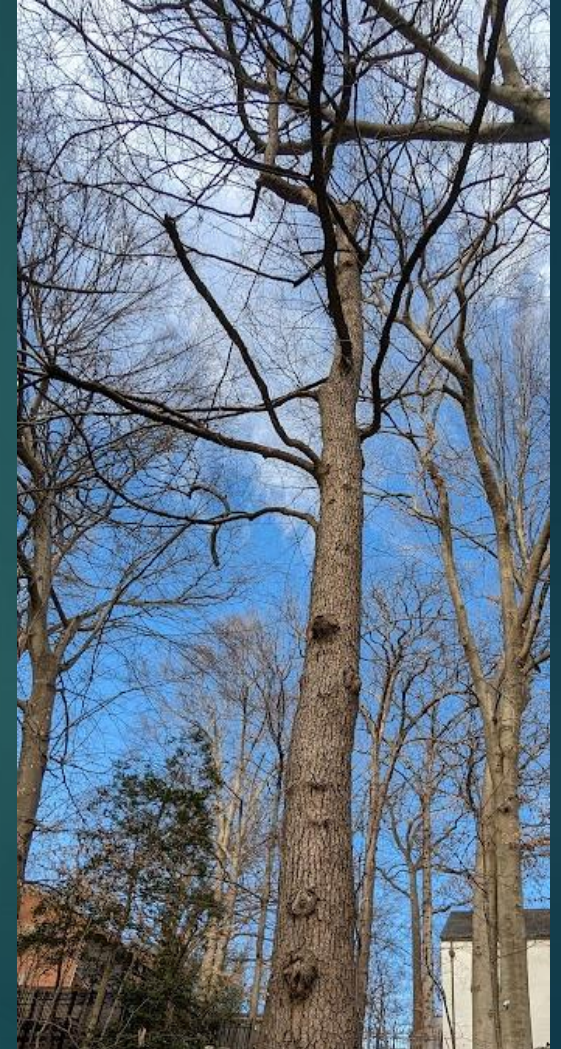
Poison Ivy also branches at 90 degrees





# Black Gum

Funky at  
the top





# Small Blocks no. 4

**Southern Red Oak**  
*Quercus falcata*

Fairly common in all  
of Sligo

Dry slopes





# Chunky Ridges



Black Walnut



Chestnut Oak



Eastern Cottonwood



# Chunky Ridges no. 1

**Black Walnut**  
*Juglens nigra*

Fairly common in all of  
Sligo

Floodplains and moist  
slopes





# Chunky Ridges no. 2

**Chestnut Oak**  
*Quercus montana*

Uncommon in Sligo

Carroll Avenue bridge  
to the powerline

Dry slopes (where  
walnuts don't appear)





# Chunky Ridges no. 3

**Eastern Cottonwood**  
*Populus deltoides*

Uncommon in Sligo

Floodplains

East-West to Maple,  
Piney Branch to Wayne,  
Colesville to Forest Glen,  
above University





# Quiz: Which one is Black Gum?

A  
(upland or floodplain)



B  
(floodplain)



C  
(floodplain)





# Flat Narrow Strips or Ridges



American Elm



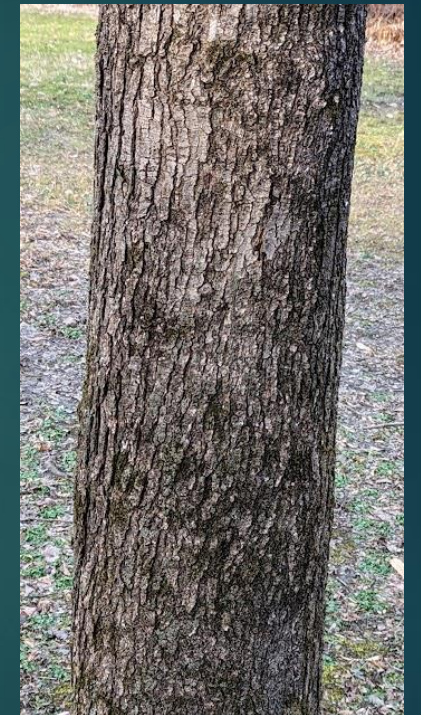
Hickory



Sassafras



Box-elder



Red Maple



# Flat Narrow Strips no. 1

**American Elm**  
*Ulmus americana*

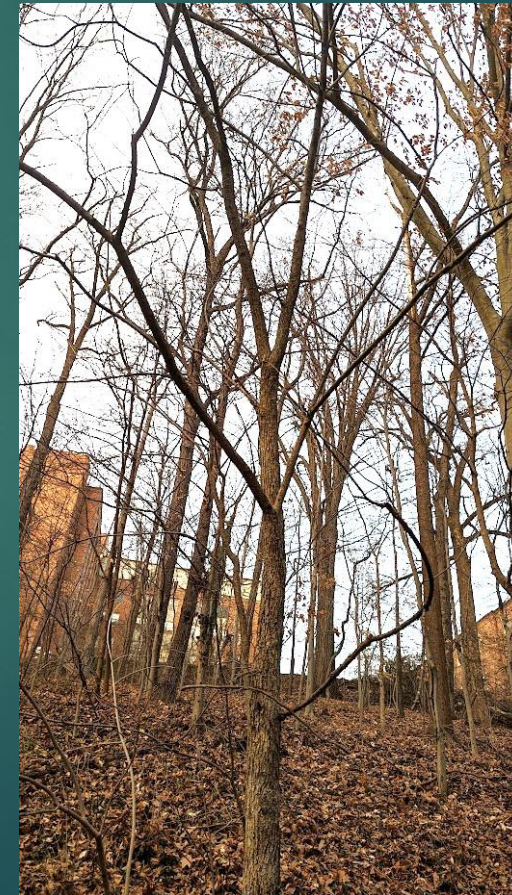
Pale color

Vertical, spongy strips

Trunk usually branches

Common throughout Sligo

Floodplains & creek banks



Right photo: by go botany  
native plant trust



# Flat Narrow Strips no. 2

## **Mockernut Hickory**

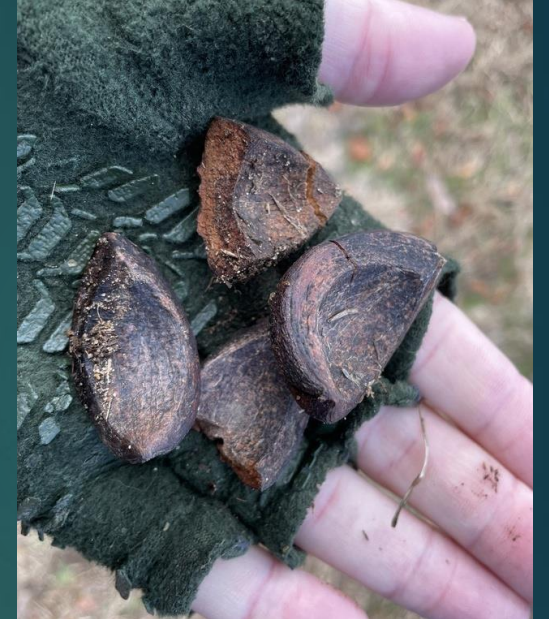
*Carya tomentosa*

## **Pignut Hickory**

*Carya glabra*

Silvery color; angled, crisscrossing strips

Both fairly common throughout Sligo on moist or dry slopes



Mockernut husks much thicker than Pignut



# Flat Narrow Strips no. 3

**Sassafras**

*Sassafras albidum*

Common in all  
parts of Sligo

Open woodlands  
and forest edges;  
deer don't eat

Strips also  
described as ridges



Bottom right by Peter Martin



# Flat narrow strips no. 4

Box-elder  
(Ash-leaf Maple)  
*Acer negundo*

Common in all of Sligo

Creek banks & floodplains

Suckers often on trunk

New stems green

“Strips” actually ridges





# Flat narrow strips no. 5

**Red Maple**  
*Acer rubrum*

Only on lower trunk

Common in all Sligo

Cavities provide nesting  
sites





# Shallow Ridges



Tulip-tree



Pin Oak



White & Green Ash



# Shallow Ridges no. 1

## **Tulip-tree**

*Liriodendron  
tulipifera*

Common in all of  
Sligo

Floodplains &  
moist slopes

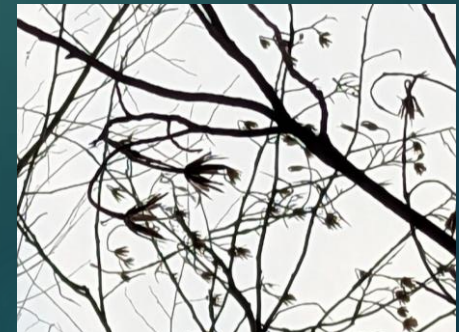
Look for seed  
heads above





# Tulip-tree

Bark changes with age.





# Shallow Ridges no. 2

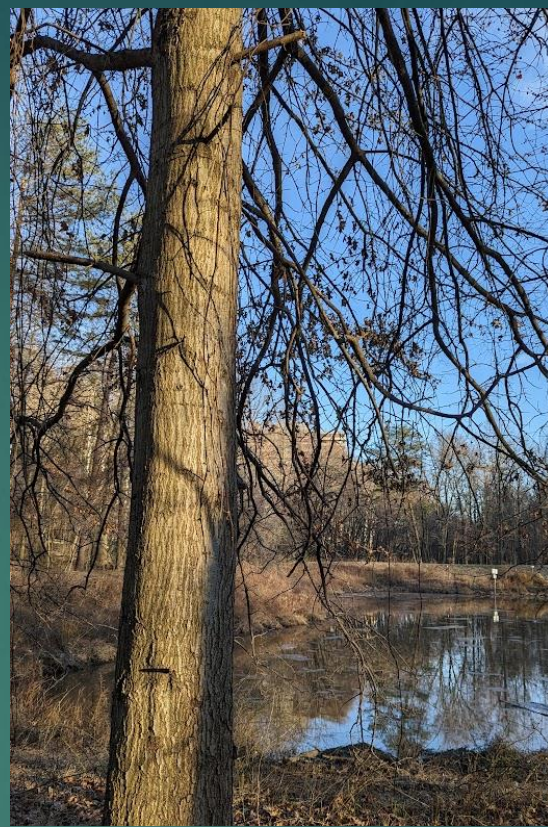
## Pin Oak

*Quercus palustris*

Fairly common in  
Sligo, except Maple  
to Wayne

Floodplains and  
wetlands

Downward arching  
lowest branches





# Shallow Ridges no. 3

## Ashes

### White Ash

*Fraxinus americana*

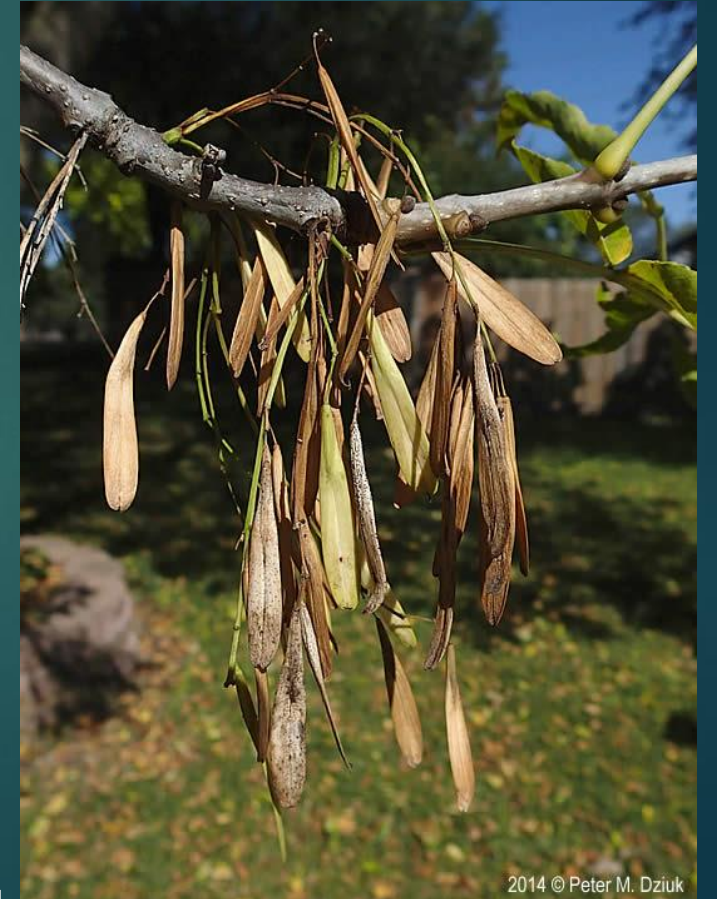
### Green Ash

*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*

As of c. 2015, fairly common  
in all of Sligo

Most cut down near trails,  
playgrounds, picnic areas

Many seedlings & saplings





# Quiz: Which one is Tulip-tree?

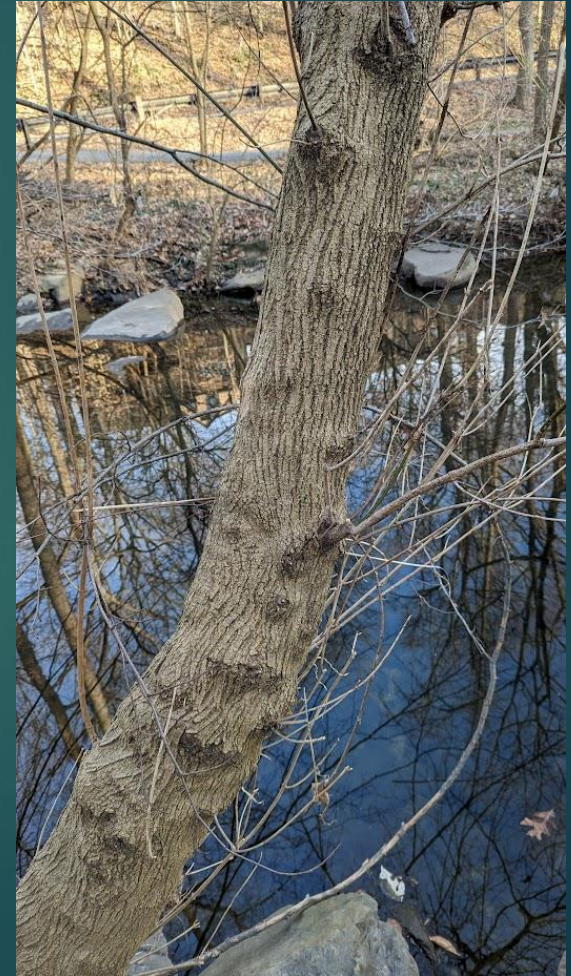
A



B



C





### Silver Maple

Silver Maple leaves, with five lobes each, retain their silvery-gray undersides after falling, which may be all you see because they curl up tightly along creek sides or in floodplains.



## Maples

### Red Maple

Leaves of Red Maple, with their three triangular lobes, can blanket floodplains, where their gray undersides stand out.



### American Sycamore

The biggest leaves are those of American Sycamores, which look a bit like maples but are much larger and usually have jagged edges. (If you see these along city streets, they're probably from the closely related London Plane tree.)



### American Beech

The egg-shaped leaves of American Beech (closely related to oaks) have parallel veins, each of which ends at a single pointed tooth along the leaf's edge.



### American Elm

Near creek banks, look for leaves of American Elm, with their asymmetrical base.



### Tulip Tree

Tulip-tree leaves are often near the bottom of the leaf layer, while their winged seeds fall later and are easy to spot.

Tulip trees (and Hickory trees) are among the earliest trees to drop their leaves in fall.

# READING THE LEAVES

## Leave the Leaves!

You can provide wildlife habitat in your yard by not mowing, raking, or blowing away your fallen leaves. Many valuable insects — including butterflies and other pollinators — overwinter in the leaf litter as eggs, caterpillars, chrysalises, or adults. Your leaves offer protection and nutrition. Later, birds will have enough caterpillars to raise their young.

Try to "leave the leaves" under bushes, in garden beds and under trees — wherever you can — to ensure next year's pollinators and build the soil!



### Southern Red Oak

The long top lobe of the Southern Red Oak is unmistakable, though the rest of the leaf can vary in shape.



### White Oak

White Oak leaves are distinguished by their rounded lobes.



### Northern Red Oak

Northern Red Oak leaves have a wide center and short, multi-pointed lobes.



### Pin Oak

Pin Oaks and the two other oaks in Sligo (Black and Scarlet) all have narrow centers and long lobes. Habitat can narrow it down:

Pin Oaks grow in floodplains while Black and Scarlet Oaks are found on upland slopes.

## Oaks



Enjoy your new-found skills!

