

Follow us and tag your photos #oakhillcemeterydc!

 @oak_hill_cemetery
 @OakHillCemeteryDC
 @OakHill_DC

Hours of Operation

Discover stories of history, monuments and lives of those buried here during our office hours. We are a historic site so we ask that you please proceed with caution and respect.

Monday – Friday 9 am – 4:30 pm
Saturday 11 am – 4 pm (walk-in gate only)
Sunday 1 pm – 4 pm (walk-in gate only)

*Closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Years Day

202.337.2835
3001 R Street NW, Washington, DC 20007

To learn more about our grounds or to donate, visit:
www.oakhillcemeterydc.org

For burial site information, contact the superintendent.



OAK HILL CEMETERY



Arbor Tour

*Made possible by a donation from
the Georgetown Garden Club.*



The Oak Hill Cemetery is a historic garden cemetery of unique character, a forested and picturesque landscape of dells and glades, terraced paths and forested hills, with an eclectic collection of stones and statuary memorializing over 20,000 souls. The trees have always been an integral part of our picturesque landscape.

“Its hills were the play-grounds of my childhood... all trees, not decidedly too obtrusive, are to be left standing for the sake of that pleasant idea which we all entertain of a sleep beneath the waving woods....” William W. Corcoran’s instructions regarding the trees of Oak Hill and the woods that were here at the cemetery’s founding in 1849.

Trees are living sculptures, with lives that can dwarf a humans’ lifespan, living for generations in the same spot where they were born. Trees are mysteriously social, gregarious, and enjoy the company of other trees.

6



Few of our trees date to the founding of the cemetery, more than 170 years ago. We continuously plant new trees to improve our grounds in ways that not only preserve our landscape but align with the original design and essential character of a 19th century naturalistic garden cemetery.

Plant names and scientific nomenclature are both important to distinguish a tree. Scientific names use a first name (the genus, a capitalized proper noun) and a last name (the species, an adjective or descriptive epithet). There are further divisions as well: *ssp.* for sub-species; *v.* or *var.* for variety; *f.* or *forma* for form; and *cv.* means *cultivar*, or a cultivated variety.



#1, 3, 6 - Oak Tree or *Quercus*
There is a reason we are called Oak Hill. With about a dozen species of *Quercus* on our grounds, our noble Oaks are integral to the character of the place and symbols of strength and endurance. The oaks of Eastern North American forests are divided into two distinct sections: the white oaks, with annual acorns and lobed leaves and the red oaks, with biennial acorns and bristle-tipped leaves. Acorns are a nut consisting of the calyium (the fruit) and the cupule (the “cup” of the acorn). In fall, the leaves turn various shades of scarlet, orange, and brown. The classification of oak species is a matter of debate. Oaks have great variability within species because of such widespread interspecific hybridization that even the concept of species has been questioned by several authors, with JBS Haldane concluding that “the concept of a species is a concession to our linguistic habits and neurological mechanisms.”

#2 - *Ilex opaca f. xanthocarpa*, Yellow-fruited American Holly is the uncommon yellow-fruited form of the American holly tree that occurs naturally and sporadically. There are more than 1,000 named cultivated varieties of American holly. The yellow-berried form was introduced into cultivation around 1901. The scientific name translates to “yellow-fruited form of the holly with matte leaves.” American holly is a classic evergreen “framework” tree, with a nice matte-green color and decorative texture year-round. American holly tolerates shade, although with sparser growth. Berry production is highest in full sun.

#4 Chinese Wingnut, *Pterocarya stenoptera* (Greek for “winged nut” with “narrow wings”) is an uncommon, fast growing, and wide spreading tree not often found in American landscapes but used as a shade tree throughout China. It was introduced to Western gardens around 1860. It is in the walnut family, with similar compound leaves and separate male and pendulous ornamental female catkins that form long chains of decorative and distinctive small, narrow, two-winged nutlets instead of large walnuts.

#5 Tulip Tree, or *Liriodendron tulipifera*, from the Ancient Greek for “lily-tree bearing tulips,” has large pale green goblet flowers and unusual tulip-shaped leaves and distinctive furrowed bark. It is one of the tallest forest trees native to Eastern North American forests, with documented trees 600 years in age. *L. tulipifera* has been found to be a “molecular fossil” with a very slow mutation rate and a genome that has been more-or-less frozen in time for millions and millions of years. With a mutation rate 2,000 times slower than humans, the amount of genomic change in a single human generation would take 50,000 years in the Tulip Tree.

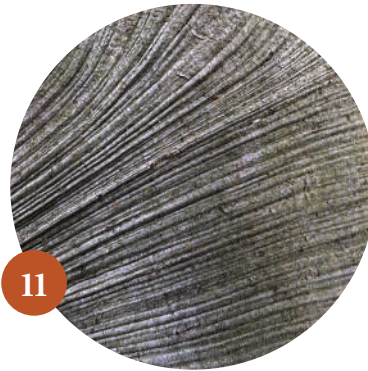
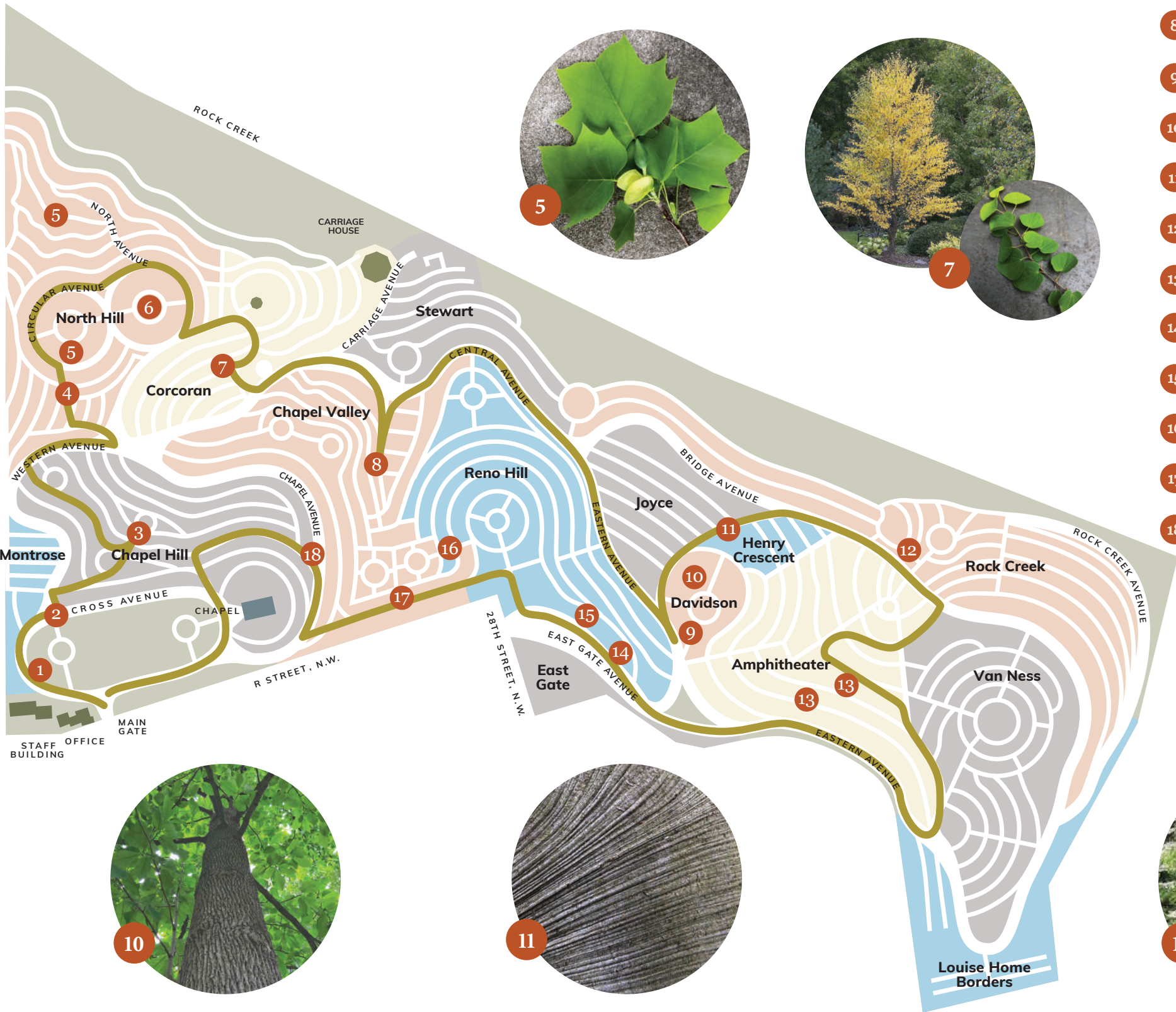
#7 - *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, the Japanese Katsura Tree, is one of Japan’s largest and finest deciduous forest trees. On warm days in autumn, the coloring heart-shaped leaves can smell like caramel due to the chemical maltol. Thomas Hogg Jr. whose family owned a plant nursery in Manhattan introduced the tree to the United States in 1865. In 1861, Thomas was nominated by Abraham Lincoln to be a Marshal of the Consular Court in Japan for eight years. He later returned to Japan as an advisor to the Japanese Customs Service, which gave him authority to travel widely throughout Japan, collecting many fine garden plants for American horticulture. Japanese plants, like flowering cherry, do very well in the Washington D.C. area because of the similarities of climate.

#8 - *Fagus sylvatica f. pendula*, the Weeping European Beech, with its picturesque drooping habit, is one of many varieties of European beech that have been selected from nature. To tell the difference between European and American beech, the diagnostic (from the Greek “to know the difference between”), notice that European beech has shorter, thicker buds (think old-world cigar) compared to the sharp slender buds (think cigarette) of the American beech. Like oaks, another member of the Beech family, the dead leaves of beech trees persist through winter. This is known as marcescence and is thought to be a defense against winter deer browsing.



#9 - The Lacebark Pine, *Pinus bungeana*, is a choice conifer native to northern China notable for its exfoliating, jigsaw puzzle patches of green, blue, brown, yellow, gray, and white bark, with older trees having chalky white trunks. The lacebark pine was first botanically described and named from specimens collected from temple gardens in Beijing by Aleksandr von Bunge, a professor of botany who traveled on a botanical research expedition in 1830-31 from Siberia through Mongolia to Beijing. Often planted in ancient graveyards, temple grounds, and Imperial gardens in China, one particularly famous ancient lacebark pine, “the Nine-Dragon Pine”, was growing in an imperial temple in Beijing, and was reportedly 900 years old in 1932.

#10 *Magnolia acuminata*, or Cucumbertree is a fairly large and uncommon tree native to cool, moist Eastern North American forests, introduced into gardens as early as 1736. In contrast to the more well-known evergreen Southern Magnolia with its bold flowers and glossy evergreen foliage,



1	3	6	Oak Tree <i>Quercus</i>
2			Yellow-Fruited American Holly <i>Ilex opaca f. xanthocarpa</i>
4			Chinese Wingnut <i>Pterocarya stenoptera</i>
5			Tulip Poplar <i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>
7			Katsura Tree <i>Cercidiphyllum japonicum</i>
8			Weeping European Beech <i>Pendula fagus sylvantica</i>
9			Lacebark Pine <i>Pinus bungeana</i>
10			Cucumbertree <i>Magnolia acuminata</i>
11			American Beech <i>Fagus grandifolia</i>
12			Female Ginkgo <i>Ginkgo biloba</i> female
13			Male Ginkgo <i>Ginkgo biloba</i> male
14			Female American Holly <i>Ilex opaca</i> female
15			Male American Holly <i>Ilex opaca</i> male
16			Sourwood <i>Oxydendrum arboretum</i>
17			Canadian Hemlock <i>Tsuga canadensis</i>
18			Chinese Fir <i>Cunninghamia lanceolata</i>

M. acuminata is deciduous and grown primarily for its handsome, low-key elegance. The large, pale yellow flowers are slightly fragrant, but easily overlooked due to the fact that the flowers appear with the leaves on branch ends high off the ground. The genus name “*Magnolia*” was established in 1703 and honors Pierre Magnol, a botanist, who was the first person to publish the concept of plant families as a natural classification group. The common name of Cucumbertree refers to the fruits that resemble small knobby cornichons, which are irregular due to uneven fertilization and seed development within the fruit. At maturity each individual seed hangs from an individual folicle, suspended like scarlet jewels from the fruit by a long thread called a funiculus, dancing in the breeze to attract birds to disperse the fruit. *M. acuminata* typically lives for a hundred years or so, but in 2003 an individual specimen in Kentucky was found to be 348 years old.

#11 *Fagus grandifolia* also known as the American Beech, is a fine, elegant, and majestic large forest tree, like smooth elephantine buttressed columns of a grand forested cathedral.



#12 & #13 - The Ginkgo, *Ginkgo biloba*, is a monotypic (last extant member in its family) “living fossil,” more related to ancient cycads than oak trees. Ginkgo have unique fan-shaped leaves and motile (swimming) gametes which are active only for a day or two in the fall, bursting forth from the grains of pollen in the already forming fruit, months after the spring pollination. A Japanese botanical illustrator observed this fascinating process through a microscope in 1896. They are dioecious, meaning separate male and female plants. The fruit is only on female trees. When the fruit falls to the ground it smells like vomitus, as DC residents know all too well. The DC street trees were initially planted as all-male clones. Whether the trees changed sex, re-sprouted from a female rootstock, or were misidentified or mis-sold at the nursery, it is unknown. But there is some documentation in the literature of individual trees changing sex. While common in temples throughout Asia, Ginkgos are almost extinct in the wild. Only fragmentary remnants of wild populations remain in a few valleys and lower mountain slopes in China. Ginkgos are classic trees in picturesque gardens and we have several large old specimens on the property, two males and a female.

#14 & 15 - *Ilex opaca*, or American Holly, is a broadleaf evergreen tree native to the Eastern United States. The smooth grey bark is distinctive with its smooth, beech-like bark. The spiny leaves have a waxy, leathery texture with spines along the edge of the leaf. Hollies are dioecious, with separate male and female plants. In order to produce fruit, both

sexes of the same species must be blooming in the area at the same time. The fruit, commonly called a berry, is botanically a drupe (like a peach or a pear). The fruit provides food source for the many birds here, especially our American robins. Birds assist in dispersing the seed by eating and digesting the fruit and passing the seed through their gut.

16 *Oxydendrum arboreum*, or Sourwood, is a somewhat uncommon native tree of Appalachian forests. In late summer it is covered with pendant panicles that look like epaulettes of white lily-of-the-valley flowers from which bees make a choice, rare honey. It is unusual in that it blooms late in the year for a tree. Its blossoms are showy for a few weeks, lasting as the shining glossy leaves turn a lustrous brilliant red fall color. Our tree is quite large for a non-wild specimen.

#17 - Canadian Hemlock, *Tsuga canadensis*, is a North American conifer with elegantly drooping branches, from cool, shady, Northern woods. Hemlock’s shade tolerance makes it a valuable landscape plant. Unfortunately, hemlock is currently experiencing catastrophic range reduction from infestations of the hemlock wooly adelgid. The hemlock wooly adelgid is an invasive insect from Asia that looks like cottony fuzz and has an unusual and complex multi-generational reproductive biology. In the pest’s native range, hemlock is just the secondary host of the insect. The sexual generations can only occur on the primary host, a particular species of Asian spruce. In North America it can only complete part of its life cycle, with two asexually produced generations of only female insects per year. It uses piercing mouthparts to suck vitality from the tree. Eastern hemlock is not (nor even related to) the hemlock poison (Conium or perhaps Aconitum) that Socrates drank.



#18 - *Cunninghamia lanceolata*, Chinese Fir, is a conifer with sharp blue needles and attractive mahogany brown bark that exfoliates in strips. It is not a fir tree but rather a monotypic (only one species) genus of conifer considered to be either the most primitive surviving member of the Cypress family or perhaps the only member of its own family. It was introduced into Western gardens as early as 1702 for its effect in the landscape. In China, this tree’s strong rot-resistant and easy-to-work timber was the preferred wood for coffin manufacture. The cut tree trunks would be buried in earth in preparation for use. This practice may originate from incidents of landslides or earthquakes burying tree trunks naturally which were discovered to be “redder and more fragrant” after being excavated.