

Tree Spotting for the first time

Quick Resources:

To enter data and print resources: https://www.usanpn.org/natures_notebook

To browse routes and easy-access resources: <http://temporalecology.org/routes/>

What to bring/wear

- A friend, if you like.
- The usual outdoor stuff (water, bug spray, sunscreen, hat, good shoes).
- A clipboard or notebook with your maps, observation sheets, and a pencil or pen.
- Binoculars, for tall trees.

Help

Please let us know what we can do to make this a fun and rewarding experience! Feel free to ask us if you want company when you go Tree Spotting - or if you need help. The Tree Spotters facebook group is also a great place to post questions and find buddies. Contact us at treespotters@fas.harvard.edu. Happy Tree Spotting!

Where to start?

Read about the routes. Choose a species or area you are most interested in. Keep terrain and other challenges in mind. Print your map and datasheets (easiest from the temporal ecology website), and take the plunge.

Feel free to experiment with different routes. At some point, you will settle on one or more routes that work for you. Once that happens, we would like you to visit as often as possible. At least twice a month will help you get a feel for what is happening with your trees. Consistently visiting a few trees is better than visiting many trees once.

If you are not familiar with the Arboretum, try printing the maps from the temporal ecology website and simply walking through some or all of the routes. Don't record observations. Just look at the trees and think about what it would be like to observe them. Some routes are easy, others challenging. Here's one take on them:

Beech Route

All five trees are close together and not far off Valley Road, but you do have to scramble a bit to get to them, since they are on a slope surrounded by suckers. They are beautiful, shady, tall trees with few low branches, so binoculars help- and you do have to walk around in the underbrush to get good views. They are only a short walk from the South Street gate, but if you come from there, the first tree you encounter will be number 5 and you won't see the sign - it's in the underbrush. So for your first visit, we suggest you walk up the hill a bit on Valley Road (past the Beech Path) and then look to the right for the signs. Once you see one sign, you will quickly see them all.

Birch Route

These trees are scattered on either side of Bussey Hill Road, soon after the path that leads to the Dana Greenhouses if you are coming up from the Visitors' Center. The River Birches are close to the road, but you need to walk up the grassy hill to get to the Yellow Birches. It's a lovely spot, especially in the late afternoon. You may want to bring a blanket so you can sit down and relax awhile! Number 10 is off by itself, so it's a little harder to locate. Look to the left and uphill from number 9, and you should see the sign. It's a smaller tree, and quite easy to observe, so it's worth the hike. (FYI, during summer there are port-a-potties nearby, near the Greenhouses.)

Hickory Route

The closest gate is the Centre Street gate, but there is limited parking there. You can also park on Bussey Street or at the South Street gate and visit the beeches, then walk up Valley Road to visit the hickories. (That means that visiting the hickories in reverse order, starting with number 10, which is near the beginning of the Conifer Path.) If you feel ambitious, you can go on to the birches after that. The hickories are a bit scattered, and a couple of them are pretty far from the road. You also have to deal with more hilly terrain and it can be a little buggy in there for some reason. But if you like nuts and interesting bark, this is the place for you!

Linden/North Woods Route

This is one of the two easiest terrains (the other is the Maple Route) and it's close to the Visitors' Center. You do need to walk off Bussey Hill Road into the woods, but the grass is kept mowed and it's relatively flat and open. TIP: you can easily get from this route to the Maple Route (and of course, vice versa).

Maple Route

This is another easy route. It's relatively easy walk along the Willow Path (even though it's not paved) and the trees are easy to observe. The maple grove is a lovely spot - another cool haven on a warm summer's afternoon - and in the fall, it is spectacular.

Oak Route

This is the most challenging route. The trees are in the woods along the side of Bussey Hill, well off the paved road, and in some cases, well off the unpaved Oak Path. Number 4, in particular, requires a serious up-hill climb to reach if you choose to get to it from the Oak Path. (You can observe it from Bussey Hill Road as it winds up the hill from the Oak Path, however, and there are some branches that are easy to view from there.) The oaks are tall and majestic and you will definitely need binoculars to see what's happening with them. If you enjoy hiking and spending a lot of time looking up into the treetops through binoculars, you will enjoy this route. (Birders, take note!)

Peters Hill Route

This route is an easy loop, with a variety of trees close to Peter's Hill Road, with some uphill walking. You get to see 5 different species: American Linden, Cottonwood, Sugar Maple, White Oak, and Yellow Buckeye. This is a popular dog-walking area, please leash your dog in the Arboretum.