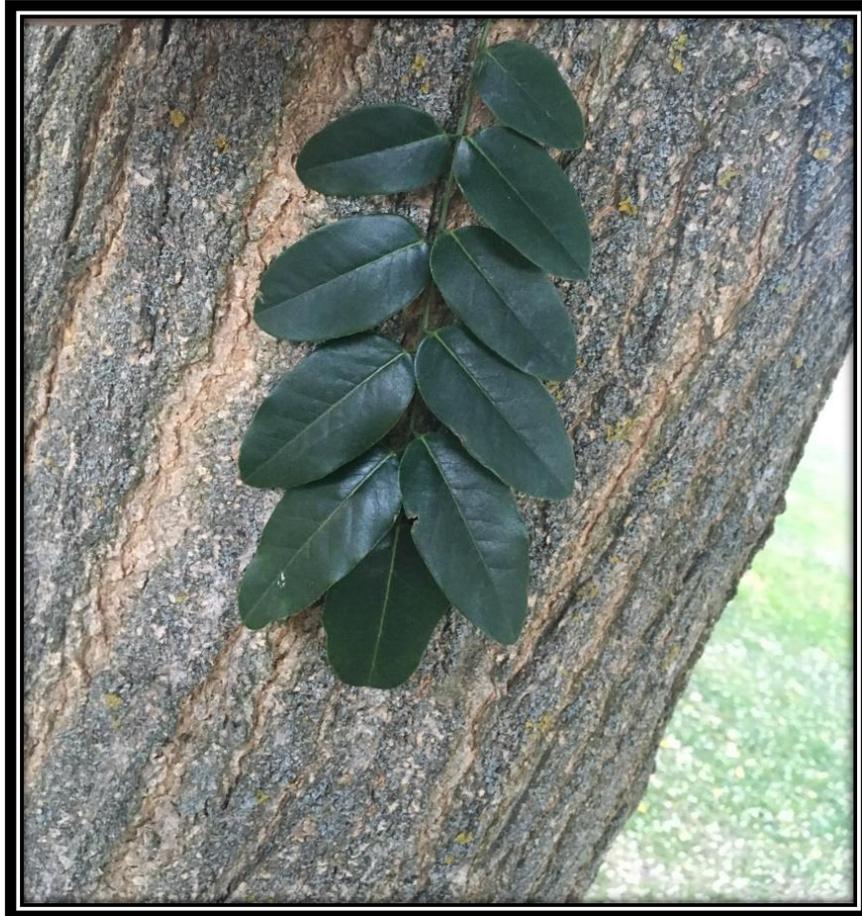


Colchester Castle Park

Tree Trail



Pagoda Tree (No.51)

Bark and leaf - Detail

Christopher Howard



Produced by the Friends of Castle Park – www.friendsofcastlepark.com

Colchester Castle Park

Tree Trail



Welcome to the Castle Park and to a trail that leads you past some of our more interesting and notable trees. Trees, those large woody plants that we sometimes take for granted. We benefit from their welcome shade on a hot summer's day, or stroll through the landscape happily accepting the beauty and diversity they bring to our surroundings. That is, until we notice an unusual leaf, strange fruits, colourful bark, or perhaps, surprising flowers that we'd not noticed before, and then we think: *What is that tree?* Perhaps this little guide will help. If this is your first visit to the park you will find helpful maps at the main entry gates.

A tree index, glossary and map can be found at the back of this guide
Dates of introduction of trees in the text refer to Britain

Our trail begins close to the park's Museum Street entrance facing the entrance bridge of the magnificent Norman castle. There is much to discover; enjoy your walk.

Colchester's Castle Park is a gem. It remains an enduring part of our local heritage; one that is as proudly valued today as it was in 1892 when it first opened.



The trail begins with an oddity, but not a rarity, and is the highest, but not the tallest tree. Look up! Next to the cupola above the castle entrance is the castle's famous (1) **Sycamore** (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). Legend has it that there's been a tree in the same spot since 1815, planted by the gaoler's daughter to commemorate victory at Waterloo. This one has been there since the seventies, planted by the mayor's daughter. It is watered but the tree is rather stunted, nonetheless it's healthy enough to give a good show of foliage each year. There are plenty of larger specimens later on the trail.

Move towards the stone bench on your left; facing this and on the right of the bench is (2) a **Variegated Chinese Privet** (*Ligustrum lucidum f. variegata*). This young tree was planted in 2017 to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the opening of Castle Park. As a variegated evergreen it stands out in the winter and has panicles of white flowers towards its top in the autumn. It should develop into a medium-sized symmetrical tree standing as a handsome sentinel by the main entrance.

With the privet on your left follow the path ahead into the park until the first tree on your left, before the split in the paths. This is (3) a **Crimean Lime** (*Tilia x euchlora*). This is the first of four different species of Lime that you will see on the trail. This rather conical tree is distinctive for its shiny darker green leaves, which are matt green on the underside. In the autumn individual leaves turn bright yellow giving it a 'speckled' appearance from a distance.

The next tree is beside the Lime. It is (4) a **Sweet Chestnut** (*Castanea sativa*). The tree has been lopped but it stands out because of its deeply ridged bark, noticeable here on the trunk above the surrounding bushes. The species was introduced into Britain by the Romans (who also left much of the building material used in the Norman Keep behind you). Its beautiful display of catkins in the summer is only followed by a viable crop of Chestnuts in very warm summers, but the spiny husks are always there.

Move on to the first tree on the grass island between the paths. This is the first of ten different oaks that you will see on the trail. This one is (5) a **Hungarian Oak** (*Quercus frainetto*). It will be interesting to compare oak leaves as you move along the trail, with the different varieties selected. The leaves here are easily the largest of all the oaks in the park's collection, sometimes 25cm in length with large and regular lobes.

Cross to the castle wall, standing under the middle of the three lower lancet windows. With the castle behind you, the tree ahead is the first of four different Ashes. This one is (6) a **Manna Ash** sometimes called the Flowering Ash (*Fraxinus ornus*). If you look at this row of trees from here, depending on the season, you will notice differences in their shape and form. Cross back to No.6 and note the smooth bark – one of the differences that helps you to identify some of the different Ashes. It has remarkable panicles of fluffy creamy-white flowers

in the spring. Manna can mean divine nourishment or an unexpected gift (as in manna from heaven). This tree's gift is manna sugar, a type of sweetener that can be derived from its sap.

Move past the next two trees to the Ash that is more pendulous, and with larger leaflets. This is (7) the **Red Ash** (or sometimes, rather confusingly, called the Green Ash) (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*). While the bark of the Manna Ash was quite smooth, you will notice the very distinctive criss-cross ridging on this one. There should be a low enough branch to note the leaves and some buds. The latter have a brown suede appearance and the terminal bud is quite pointed.

Move on to the final Ash in this group of trees. This is (8) the **Common Ash** (*Fraxinus excelsior*). This is the last of our native trees into leaf. It has soot-black buds and the leaves, like all Ashes, are pinnate, with opposite pairs of leaflets. The Ash is also one of the first trees to drop its leaves in the autumn. It is a common woodland and hedgerow tree and its timber is often used for traditional tools like fork handles.

At the end of this lawn are two Cedar Trees. The first, on the right, is (9) **Deodar** (*Cedrus deodara*). Given time this can be a beautiful large tree with some of its branches of pendent habit. The leaves are in small rosettes and are the longest of the cedars.

Moving to the second, to the left with its blue/grey colour, is (10) the **Blue Atlas Cedar** (*Cedrus atlantica* Glauca Group). The tree is attractive for its form and colour; notice that some of these branches are ascending and rather neat in habit. Originally from the Atlas Mountains in north Africa this variety has vigorous growth and needs space to develop.

Move a few metres to the path nearest the west side of the park and the tall tree in front you with rough and deeply ridged bark is (11) the **False Acacia** (*Robinia pseudoacacia*). Its attractive compound leaves have pairs of oval leaflets. Most attractive in June with its hanging spikes of fragrant white flowers. The later seed pods (it is a member of the pea family, *Fabaceae*) often hang into the winter.

Carry on down this path to the last tree on the left before the gate. This is (12) a **Keaki** (*Zelkova serrata*). A member of the *Ulmaceae* family, related to the Elms. It usually shows some good autumn colours. The tree makes a wonderful large parasol and if you walk under this you should be able to note the distinctive orange-brown patches on its bark.

Move back to the main path through the park and then take the path round towards two brick gate piers where you will find the silver-grey foliage of (13) an **Olive** (*Olea europaea*). The bricks warm in the sunshine and while not creating a Mediterranean climate, they do provide favourable growing conditions for this tree. It fruits quite heavily in some summers but these never seem to get much larger than a pea.

Now move back towards the far brick wall and the door of the little building at its end. Facing the door, the very large tree on your right is (14) a **Silver Pendent Lime** (*Tilia tomentosa* 'Petiolaris'). It has clusters of very fragrant small creamy-white flowers in the summer, possibly too high for you to see in detail. You may notice that the smell attracts a great many bees and some have said that the tree itself appears to be humming! This Lime gets its name from the silvery underside of the leaves; quite different from tree No.3.

Moving back towards the main path the next tree immediately on your left is (15) a **Persian Ironwood** (*Parrotia persica*). If you stoop to see the tangled mess of branches of this typically squat tree, the blackish bark usually has some cream or grey plates where it has shed. The tree flowers in late winter with small ruby-like clusters before the leaves, which are large and tend to colour very well to a deep red in the autumn. It was introduced into Britain in 1841 from Iran and its wood, as you may have gathered from its name, is very hard.

Turn towards the beacon and take the path with the shallow steps on the left. Behind the second bench is (16) a **Mirbeck's Oak** (*Quercus canariensis*). This tree is relatively rare here and originally from Spain and North Africa. Many Oak leaves are similar to the familiar English Oaks you may know. Mirbeck's tend to be larger, fairly glossy and with smaller regular lobes. While not an evergreen, this one often retains some green leaves until the spring.

Continue down the steps past another large False Acacia (No.11) with very ridged bark, to the next tree on the trail, which leans in from the left. This is (17) a **Turner's Oak** (*Quercus x turneri*). This is a hybrid (crossed) evergreen oak from English and Holm Oaks, both of which you will pass later. Notice how some of these leaves are more 'stretched', and smaller compared to Mirbeck's Oak.

Continue down the path and the last tree on your right behind a low hedge is (18) the Wellingtonia or **Giant Redwood** (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*). With very reddish-brown bark, this is a relatively young specimen of what is believed to be the world's biggest tree (not tallest, that is the Coast Redwood). The taller it grows the more flared its base will become. This giant is a big useless softy; in timber terms, it has very soft wood indeed, but it looks impressive.

Before leaving the upper park, the last tree on your right standing by itself, is (19) the **London Plane** (*Platanus x hispanica*). This is a tough tree. Planted a lot in London streets and parks where it can tolerate high pollution levels. Its leaves are maple-like but it has some distinctive characteristics in bark and fruits. It stands out for its scaly bark, showing greys, cream and brown, it's sometimes called blotchy. The fruits become very noticeable in the winter after the leaves fall. These are three-centimetre balls of hairy seeds, which then break up in the spring.

Pass through the gates into the lower park and the first tree on your right is (20) a **Sweet Gum** (*Liquidambar styraciflua*). Originally from the USA, it was introduced in 1681. The leaves of this tree fool many into thinking it is a maple, but they grow alternately, rather than opposite each other, like maple leaves. Its fruits are rather different too – free hanging small knobbly spheres. This tree excels in the autumn with its ‘hot flush’, showing a superb crimson and gold glow, given the right conditions.

Take the path left with the boating lake over to your right (WCs on left) and half way along you will find on your right, (21) the **Variegated Sycamore** (*Acer pseudoplatanus f. variegatum*). This is a variegated form of the Castle’s tree (No1). The beautifully dappled green leaves look as if they have been splashed with a lighter colour from a fine paintbrush. This is nature being rather artistic; every leaf has a different pattern – take a look.

Diagonally opposite this, behind the litter bin is (22) the **Foxglove Tree** (*Paulownia tomentosa*) with its shallow-ridged grey bark. It performs best in warm weather when it will give an impressive show of tall heads of violet-blue flowers in June before the very large heart shaped leaves appear. It goes on to show interesting beak-like seed capsules. There is another example planted in full sun later in the trail. When in flower, this particular specimen is best viewed from the path outside the railings, as there is better growth nearer the crown.

Moving towards the gates, the last tree on the left, beside the fence is (23) a **Bird Cherry** (*Prunus padus*). A common tree but not often found in gardens. It is most notable in the late spring for its numerous stiff spikes of white flowers. The cherries later in the year are small, black and rather bitter.

With your back to the gates and facing the old stone drinking fountain are two tall upright trees. On the right is (24) a **Cypress Oak** (*Quercus robur ‘Fastigiata’*). This is sometimes mistaken for a Lombardy Poplar but it’s an English Oak but in a neat form (fastigiated) with near vertical branches. We go on to look at the English Oak in more detail later in the trail.

The tree on the left is (25) a **Lawson Cypress** (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*). A common tree in many parks, it adds interest here as an attractive evergreen in the winter. It originally comes from the U.S. north-west coast where it is much valued for its timber.

Following the path towards the river you pass, on your right, one of the easiest trees to identify, which is (26) the **Monkey Puzzle** (*Araucaria araucana*). Not as common as you might think, yet somehow familiar. It is one of our ‘living fossils’ and was around at the time of the dinosaurs. This one is a young specimen; eventually heavy cones should form at the end of the upper branches which take two years to ripen. Introduced in 1795, it originally comes from South America, where it is no longer common in the wild.

On the triangle of grass with the locked gate behind you, the forward left tree with the largest trunk is particularly attractive. It is (27) the **Fern-Leaved Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Aspleniifolia'). Note the puzzling variation in the leaves. Some are lobed like an oak and others at the shoot tips are narrow like a willow, very interesting. If it's a fine day, look up at the blue sky through the soft green and almost feathery foliage. It's magical. Take the time to look back at this tree from the other side of the lake when you move on. Like many of the trees on the trail, they can also be admired from a distance, to fully appreciate their form.

Take the path on the left towards the gates and just beyond these, near the river, you will find (28) the **Narrow-leaved Ash** (*Fraxinus angustifolia*). Our final Ash tree; its compound leaves form a quite delicate foliage with smaller leaflets than other Ashes which seem to merge into 'clouds'. Look up through the leaves to appreciate how fine and delicate they are.

Take the path that follows the river and at the junction with the next turning right you will find a mature specimen of (29) the **Common Lime** (*Tilia x europaea*). This tree has much more flimsy leaves than the other two Limes seen earlier (Nos.2 & 14). These attract aphids which create the sticky honeydew fondly remembered by motorists that park under Common Limes as street trees – be warned. These are quite robust trees and can be heavily pollarded, as you'll notice later, near the bandstand.

Follow the shady river path until you come to a bridge on your left; with your back to this you will be facing (30) a **Yellow Buckeye** (*Aesculus flava*). The bulge in the lower trunk shows this to be a graft on a Horse Chestnut. This tree has flowers similar to the Horse Chestnut but pale yellow and not as large or showy. The leathery looking conkers when they arrive have smooth husks. Have a close look at the leaves growing from the graft union, these are actually Horse Chestnut, the leaflets all fuse to their stalk. The other leaflets on the tree, while similar, are smaller and have a separate small stalk on each. In effect, it is one tree with two types of leaf. Given the circumstances this is understandable, but nonetheless, curious.

Continuing on the river path the second tree on the river side and after the bridge is (31) the **Indian Bean Tree** (*Catalpa bignonioides*). Originally from the southern U.S., this tree seems to play dead for many months and comes into leaf in late June. But what big leaves. They can be up to 30cm across and are followed in July with flower spikes that have been compared to the Foxglove Tree (No.22), which also has a similar leaf. However, these are white with very attractive yellow and purple splashes. The fruit are extraordinarily long and thin (up to 40cm) bean pods; these dangle from the branches through the winter. You will also see a smaller golden variety of this tree later on the trail.

Leave the path for the next tree; moving onto the field next to a metal cover set in a concrete square, you will find (32) a **Callery Pear** (*Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer'). A rather upright and

conical tree seen at its best from a distance in early spring for its mass of flowers, and in late autumn for its yellowy-gold foliage. This handsomely shaped specimen is a very reliable performer at the appropriate times.

Re-join the path and follow the river until just before the bend. The tree on the left here is (33) the **Hornbeam** (*Carpinus betulus*). You cannot miss its heavily buttressed and almost muscular trunk. Its leaves have distinctive double-toothed edges and the fruits are borne on 3-lobed wings. It has very hard wood, once used for butchers' blocks and the cogs in mill wheels.

Moving on, the next tree on the left, on the bend in the path is (34) the **Maidenhair Tree** (*Ginkgo biloba*). A fascinating and ancient tree. Fossil records show that the *Ginkgo biloba* existed over 200 million years ago. It has a singular and unmistakable leaf, fan-shaped and part-split down the middle. It is the only remaining species of the *Ginkgoaceae* family. Without doubt, it is a great survivor.

The very next tree is a good medium sized specimen of (35) the Common or **English Oak** (*Quercus robur*). Everyone's friend, it supplies us with excellent timber and provides a free lunch for more leaf-eating insects than any other tree in Britain. Perhaps that's because a large mature English Oak has about a quarter of a million leaves. The acorn is the well-known fruit seen in the summer and autumn, but the male flowers hanging in masses of yellow catkins deserve note in the spring.

After the Oak the next multi-stemmed trees immediately alongside, and almost in the water, are (36) **Common Alder** (*Alnus glutinosa*). An interesting wetland species, they are very much at home in this setting. The timber is waterproof and has been used for centuries where its characteristics are needed, notably in foundation work for buildings in Venice. Growing near water, these trees usually keep their leaves until quite late. You can usually notice some of this year's fruits, as well as those from the previous year, in the shape of small clusters of 'cones'.

The next tree is on the opposite side of the path, at the end of the old bowling green hedge. This is another evergreen, (37) the **Holm Oak** (*Quercus ilex*). Some of the young Holm Oak leaves are spined around the edge, but then these develop into a smooth-edged leaf, different from the lobes on most of the other oak leaves you will see. The small flowers hanging in golden catkins in the spring, and the later small acorns, help identify this as another oak.

Opposite this, again by the river, is (38) the **Caucasian Wingnut** (*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*). This has big compound lush green leaves with up to 25 leaflets that can be 60cm long, the leaflets are more oblong than rounded or oval. Note all the suckers around the base, but its glory is in the catkins. Tiny red and green flowers appear on shorter catkins in the spring and there

is a later development of 'necklaces' up to 50cm long with many green fruits, each with two semi-circular wings. A tree that seems to drip - with interest.

Moving towards the gates ahead, the last tree on your right, standing very tall by itself in a little triangle is (39) a large **Lucombe Oak** (*Quercus x hispanica* 'Lucombeana'). Quite shiny dark leaves are much smaller than Mirbeck's Oak (No.16) which you saw earlier. This tree is a cross between the Turkey Oak (not in this collection) and the Cork Oak, which you will see later. It has characteristics of both parents. The Cork Oak is evergreen and while this tree looks deciduous, it retains many leaves until the spring. The branches are rather high but if you can find a leaf on the ground you can see the fine grey felt of tiny hairs on the back. It contributes to the park's diverse oak collection

Take the path right just before the gates. The first tree on your left is (40) the divinely named **Tree of Heaven** (*Ailanthus altissima*), best viewed from the nearby Castle Park signboard. It is often confused with the Ash because of the similar large pinnate leaves. These trees are usually either male or female. The male trees have plumes of cream-white flowers in mid-summer with a strong unpleasant smell. This one is male. The fruits on female trees, which are like single Ash 'keys', ripen to bright reddish-brown in the autumn. It is a clever tree. There are tiny glands in lobes at the base of each leaf that secrete nectar and this attracts ants. These in turn combat leaf-eating insects. Look for the silver 'snaking' in the bark

Proceed to the end of this small stretch of shady path towards the next bench and on your left by another path, off to the left, is (41) the **Ash-leaved Maple** (*Acer negundo*). Its pretty and very showy plumes of male flowers appear in March and the unusual leaves follow. Most maple trees have male and female parts on the same plant, but not *Acer negundo*, so this particular male tree will never bear the familiar fruits (that children call helicopters). This can mean that other features are needed to help identify the tree, such as paired leaves. There are wind pollinated female trees nearby.

Move onto the grassed area to the small tree behind the bench. This is (42) a **Japanese Hornbeam** (*Carpinus japonica*). Introduced from Japan in 1895. This is a particularly attractive tree sometimes confused with the European Hop Hornbeam but the seed bracts are subtly different and generally a little longer, which makes them more distinctive. These fruits tend to remain on the tree after the leaves fall looking rather like small lanterns. Beautifully Japanese.

Move to the two large trees behind this, the first of these being (43) the **Smooth-leaved Elm** (*Ulmus minor var. minor*). This has distinctive criss-crossed prominent ridges in its bark and you will notice the tell-tale lop sided base of the leaves.

Behind this is (44) a **Red Oak** (*Quercus rubra*). Introduced from North America in 1724. This is a little neater in appearance than the English Oak (No.35). This variety has large leaves looking more cut and pointy than most of the other oaks on the trail. These can go a deep red after a good and long summer and a couple of cold nights. Otherwise, they tend to go a glossy brown before they fall.

Returning to the opposite side of the path and a point that's about mid-way along the old bowling green hedge is (45) **Freeman's Maple** (*Acer x freemanii* 'Autumn Blaze'). This is a cross between the Red Maple and the Silver Maple and like the name suggests it comes into its glory in the autumn. Its dense oval shaped head reliably turns a brilliant orange-red providing a seasonal beacon.

The next tree along with very white bark is (46) the **Himalayan Birch** (*Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*). This tree demonstrates that it's not only the foliage that can be very striking in appearance.

After this is another example of (No.22) the Foxglove Tree. After a few metres take a detour up the path to your left, passing on your left a much larger Deodar (No.9). The next very tall tree on your right is (47) a **Corsican Pine** (*Pinus nigra* ssp. *laricio*). A subspecies of the familiar Black Pine. It's used in forestry in the south and east of Britain and long straight sections of its bole (trunk) were often used for telegraph poles. Remember those?

After this tree return to the previous path, and then down the grass slope and go to the very conical tree. This is (48) a **Turkish Hazel** (*Corylus colurna*). Note the shiny leaves and the nuts when they come. The nuts are larger than the Common Hazel, in distinctive frilly and bristly cups, which are much favoured by the squirrels, who take most of them. The tree is also valued for its pink-brown timber, used in furniture making. Some say the bark looks slightly pinkish-brown; it has rather distinctive scaly ridges.

Return to the path and the next small tree you come to, which will eventually become very large, is (49) an **Oriental Plane** (*Platanus orientalis*). This has similar but different leaves to the London Plane (No.19) in that the finger-like lobes are much more deeply cut.

Moving along the path you will notice a rather neat mop-headed tree on the right. Go down to this, it is (50) a **Norway Maple 'Globosum'** (*Acer platanoides* 'Globosum'). The Norway Maple is a common tree with some striking cultivars, and this is one. It makes quite a statement in the landscape for a small tree; perhaps it deserves an avenue!

Next to this on the level grass is an interesting tree, (51) the **Pagoda Tree** (*Styphnolobium japonicum*). Originally from China, it was introduced in 1753. It needs a fine and warm summer to flower and this one did so in profusion in 2018, followed by the rarer seed pods.

It's easy to confuse this tree with the False Acacia (No.11) but the flowers, when they appear in late summer/early autumn, are much more exuberant, and the leaves a deeper green. The bark is also more attractive, grey with brown strips (see image on front cover) and not the deep ridges of the False Acacia.

Re-join the path and moving back towards the upper park, you will notice a five-bar gate on your left, to the left of that is (52) the Common or **European Larch** (*Larix decidua*). A deciduous conifer that gives a good show of new lime-green needles in the spring. This is a young tree with a rather mis-shapen top but there is a lot of other interest in its bright crimson female spring flowers and later cones as well as the previous year's cones. Gently stroke the leaves to feel how soft they are for a conifer.

In the nature reserve area behind the gate you will notice a larger specimen of the Monkey Puzzle (No.26) usually with a good display of cones, and at the very back of this area is a Cedar of Lebanon. Those keen enough can walk along the footpath for a closer look, otherwise, pass back into the upper park and you will see a raised bed on your left. In the centre of this is an odd little tree (53) the **Corkscrew Hazel** (*Corylus avellana* 'Contorta'). With its madly curling branches and crinkly leaves, the tree looks as though it's had a nasty shock, but it's quite well. Wayward flower arrangers seem to like using the tree's twigs, perhaps because they bring a little riotous disorder to otherwise neat arrangements.

Continue along the path on the right that cuts diagonally across the grassy slope. You will notice on the right near the wall, a fine large specimen of the Variegated Sycamore (No.21), that you saw earlier. This tree has a beautiful shape and form that comes from being allowed the space to develop naturally.

The first tree on the right near the path after the first bench is (54) the **Tulip Tree** (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). In this open position it is likely to mature into one of the most handsome trees in the park. As you can see, it has very distinctive leaves, lobed and ending in a slightly V shaped notch. It flowers in June and these are at their best after a warm spring when there should be abundant yellow-and-green tulips. They do blend with the foliage rather well, but once you spot one they all seem to appear.

Continue past the next seat to the third bench, opposite this is (55) a **Cork Oak** (*Quercus suber*). This tree has been unfairly described as a gnarled and angry looking tree, in the Harry Potter sense. Normally growing on hot scrubby hillsides in Portugal and around the Mediterranean where its bark has been used for corks for hundreds of years. Plastic capsules and screw tops are changing that, but a harvest of the bark every 8-10 years does not damage the tree. Tough tree, tough leaves. These are small often with small spiny lobes and so different from the next Oak that you will see.

Move to the next tree on the opposite side of the path with a plaque at its base marking the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. This is the last of our oaks and is (56) a **Pin Oak** (*Quercus palustris*). A close relative of the Red Oak (No.44). It has yet to realise its full potential but 'mighty Oaks from little acorns grow'. You can already see the interesting leaf with its very narrow lobes. These change colour to a beautiful deep-red in the autumn.

Go up the slope towards the bandstand and climb the stone steps to the path overlooking the formal flower beds at the foot of the ramparts. Turn left here passing (57) a **Chusan Palm** (*Trachycarpus fortunei*). A small hardy Palm tree introduced from China in 1849 and favoured in parks for adding a touch of the exotic. Which indeed it does.

At the end of the flower bed, turn left through the gap and opposite you will see (58) a **Whitebeam** (*Sorbus aria*). This tree looks beautiful in the breeze. The leaves are a light dullish-green with thick white hairs underneath. The effect is steely-grey rather than silvery, but the contrast does make you smile. There are rather dull red berries that follow the small flower heads, which are a magnet for blackbirds.

Move to your right, and turn right, passing the end of the sunken beds. Take the lower path ahead of you with the green railings on your right. The first tree behind the fence is (59) **Young's Weeping Birch** (*Betula pendula 'Youngii'*) with its mop of long hanging shoots. This is a variant of the familiar Silver Birch.

A few metres along and on the left slope behind a litter bin is (60) a large multi-stemmed **Western Red Cedar** (*Thuja plicata*). This conifer has luxuriant green foliage. This tree is Cedar in name alone. It belongs to the family of Cypresses, the same as the more familiar hybrid Leylandii, but this is altogether more handsome and distinctive than its commoner cousin. The foliage when crushed gives off a distinctive pineapple-like scent.

Continue along the path and there is a young solitary Persian Ironwood (No.15), this one is an upright cultivar and located on your left. However, opposite this and behind the fence, is the rarest tree in the park. This is (61) **Henry's Maple** (*Acer henryi*). Introduced to Britain in 1903 from central China and not at all widely planted. This particular specimen was only spotted here in 2018. It's not known at the time of writing if this is a male or female tree, but it's very likely that it's the only one in the area. It is one of the trifoliate (three leaflet) maples (like No.41) and the flowers of spring 2019 are awaited with eager anticipation. The leaves turn a deep red in the autumn. Our tree has been referenced to specimens in the Savill Garden, part of the Crown Estate at Windsor, where they have three. Those trees were planted in 1999 from a shipment from Sichuan; it's possible that our tree was one of that batch. Henry's Maple is now available through some specialist nurseries, but it's still uncommon. Its identity is confirmed, but more detail is awaited.

Follow the path to the end and cross over towards a large tree by a small brick shelter. This is (62) a Copper or **Purple Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica* Purpurea Group). Some visitors have called this the 'Elephant's foot tree', you'll see why. The tree, when in leaf, has an interesting variation in its colouring. The leaves are quite purple at the branch ends. Then as you move under the tree, you will notice the leaves become quite green but with purple veins; this is because of changes in the colouring pigments (anthocyanins) in the leaves, as the season moves on. These trees can sometimes become a little dull as they age but this one is quite a radiant example. A fine tree.

Standing at the top of the steps in the shelter, you will see on your right a tree that is rare in gardens. Originally from the central Japanese mountains, this is (63) the **Japanese Larch** (*Larix kaempferi*). The leaves are deciduous, very fine dark green needles. Interesting reddish grey-brown bark with grey plates. Small rounded cones add interest, as these curl back at the top like small roses. The fine branches can look a little messy in the winter, as though the tree needs a good combing.

Go past the Purple Beech, through the wooden frame supporting a Wisteria, and into the Sensory Garden. On your left are a pair of small trees. The first of these is (64) the **Golden Indian Bean Tree** (*Catalpa bignonioides* 'Aurea'). A smaller variant of one (No.31) you saw earlier, by the river. It has large yellow leaves that fade to green. Walking past this tree when it's first in leaf on a dull morning is like finding a patch of sunshine. This one does not flower as abundantly as the larger tree but it still produces the tell-tale beans, some of which, remain during the winter.

To its right is (65) a **Judas Tree** (*Cercis siliquastrum*). A tree with some unusual characteristics. It has a beautiful spring flowering of deep-pink pea-like flowers directly on the branches and even the trunk, followed by the heart shaped leaves. The tree produces brown pea pods which often stay on the tree until winter.

Pass the water feature to the last large tree on the left. This is (66) a **Field Maple** (*Acer campestre*). One of our native Maples and you can get close enough to this one to note the way that the leaves grow in opposite pairs, a feature of all Maples.

Pass the entrance to the pretty little Wetzlar Garden, to the next tree on the left just before the Hollytrees Museum building. This is (67) the **Small-leaved Lime** (*Tilia cordata*). A very old native tree with lots of small flowers very evident in high summer. What makes this one different from the other three limes are the flowers and fruits growing out at an angle instead of hanging amid the leaves, the heart-shaped leaf base and small reddish tufts of hair on the main vein joints. Small differences that help you to identify a species in the genus. This tree was presented to the town by the people of Wetzlar, one of Colchester's twin towns, in 1979.

Go down the steps opposite the Visitor Information Centre and cross to the pond in the Imola Garden. In the far-left corner you will find (68) a **Paperbark Maple** (*Acer griseum*). Its bark is in papery scrolls of colours ranging from a rich copper-red to chocolate and almost dark orange-browns. You will notice that the leaf stalks are pinkish-red and the leaf colour in the late autumn changes to orange and crimson. If you catch this tree at any time in full sun it seems to make a good photograph. This tree is also best seen, for its very attractive bark, from the path above.

To get there climb the stone steps with the garden's name on them. On the left of the steps is (69) a **Saucer Magnolia** (*Magnolia x soulangeana* 'Rustica Rubra'). This puts on a magnificent display, in early spring, of deep pink goblet-like flowers. A bit of a show-off.

At the top of the steps turn left towards the castle and left again for a closer view of the Paperbark Maple, close to another Judas tree (No.65). Moving back to where the trail began you will pass a line of elegant Silver Birches.



Do follow this trail again in another season. It is a very pleasant walk and you will be the spectator of another free performance of Nature's Wonderful Tree Show!

Thank you for taking our trail, we hope you enjoyed it - The Friends of Castle Park

GLOSSARY

Bract Modified leaf behind a flower or fruit.

Catkin A tail-like cluster of male or female flowers.

Compound A single leaf divided into leaflets.

Cultivar A cultivated variety produced from a natural species, maintained in cultivation by propagation.

Hybrid The offspring of the result of a cross between different species, sub-species or varieties often growing in close vicinity.

Leaflet One part of a compound leaf.

Lobes Rounded indentations and projections on a leaf edge

Pinnate Having leaflets in pairs on either side of the rachis (central stalk).

Raceme An elongated flowering part of the plant with stalked flowers

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MAP



The numbers indicate approximate positions and combined with directions in the text, should bring you to the right tree. The numbers are also shown in the index in case you are trying to locate a particular tree.