



# TREE TRAIL

# MILL MARSH PARK

# WELCOME TO THE PARK!

As you enter the park, you pass through an avenue of Norway maples. **1** The leaves are typical of the maple. Notice the fruit – seeds encased in double wings. They look very like the familiar sycamore. **2** You'll find many of them here mainly by the river but there is one just near the end of the avenue. The sycamore belongs to the same family as maples.

Immediately after the avenue, on the right hand side of the path is a magnificent large leafed lime. **3** Notice the fruit and, on the leaves, the little red 'dunces' hats' caused by a nail gall, a tiny mite that sucks the sap from the leaves, but does no harm to the tree. The wood doesn't warp so has often been used for making piano keys. The flowers were used to make tea during the second world war when real tea was in short supply.



The next tree is a young Swedish whitebeam **4** – you can see why it is called a whitebeam from the colour of the underside of the leaves. In spring it has lovely clusters of white flowers which then develop into scarlet berries in the autumn. The tree is a favourite of garden birds and the wood, which is hard, has traditionally been used in making furniture.

Immediately after the whitebeam, still on the right side of the path, is a locust tree, **5** also known as a false acacia, because of the unpleasant thorns on the branches and twigs (the Greek word akis, from which acacia comes, means thorn) – watch out! Notice the leaves in pairs on a long stalk. The flowers in spring are cascades of scented white flowers. The tree is a member of the pea family, like



the laburnum and the Judas tree. Its name is derived from similarities that were seen between the locust and the shape of the pod which contains beans. In Italy and Korea it is grown widely and has a reputation for improving the soil (think of peas which 'fix' nitrogen in the soil) and preventing soil erosion.

Next is an apple **6** – but don't try the fruit! Then comes a mature Norway maple **7** – so you can compare it with the young trees in the avenue, and next is the first of four kinds of oak trees. **8** This one is a red oak. **9** All oaks produce acorns, and many, but by no means all, have leaves like those of our two native oaks (the common oak, which is very common in the park!- and the sessile or durmast, of which there are none here). The red oak comes from North America.



Common Oak



Red Oak



Turkey Oak



Pin Oak

Beside the red oak is a sweet or Spanish chestnut, **10** with its long, saw-tooth leaves and its fruit in a very prickly shell (be careful about picking them up in the autumn). The nuts are edible, especially when roasted. Some people find them very tasty. The sweet chestnut is not related to the horse chestnut, whose flowers and leaves are quite different, though the fruit is similar in appearance.





On the other side of the path, at the end of the children's play area is another oak, but this one is a Turkey oak **11** (Turkey because that is one of the countries from which it comes). The acorn sits in a shaggy cup.

Next comes a rowan tree or mountain ash. **12**

The leaves are arranged in a similar way to those of the locust tree but, like the whitebeam, the rowan is a member of the rose family. The red berries are a favourite food of birds.



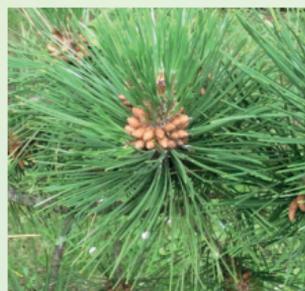
A little further along the path on the left side is the familiar Lawson's cypress, widely used as a fast growing hedging – regrettably, perhaps. Immediately after is another Swedish whitebeam. It is a member of the same family as the rowan and also of the wild service tree which you'll find further along the path.



Just after the whitebeam is a group of young silver birches, **13** famous for the way in which their silvery-white bark peels away. The bark has been a valuable ingredient in tanning leather while the strong, heavy wood was once used to make bobbins, spools and reels for the cotton industry. Like many trees (including, to the surprise of many people, oak trees) birch trees bear catkins in April and May.

After the birches we come to a Corsican pine, **14** then to its left the elegant hornbeam and further out on its own in the park, a Bhutan pine. The leaves of the Corsican pine (most people call them needles!) grow in pairs, whereas those of the Bhutan pine are in fives.

The cone of the Corsican pine is quite small and rounded and stands upright whereas the Bhutan cone is large and long and hangs downwards – but beware, they are very resinous and the resin will stick to your hands: they are best left on the ground! In May you may spot the new cones on the Bhutan pine, like a bunch of small gherkins.





The tree over at the end of the skate park is a coast redwood **15** from Oregon and California. Though evergreen its foliage is quite different from the pines, more like that of the Lawson's cypress. It is in fact a member of the same family. It takes 400 to 500 years to reach maturity: some are known to be over 1500 years old. They are the tallest of all living trees.

The park also includes other members of the family, a Wellingtonia (or giant sequoia), very tall and spire-shaped, a dawn redwood and a Japanese red cedar, a rather strange specimen beside the path to the Scout hut. The foliage of the dawn redwood is quite different and it isn't evergreen either. But the bark of all the redwoods is, as you might guess, red!

To the right of the main path in the vicinity of the junction with the path to the scout hut, and also on the right side of the path to the hut itself are several examples of the unmistakable Lombardy poplar, **16** very tall and slender, but the park also contains examples of other poplars, such as the white, grey, silver, black Italian and balsam poplar.



Back on the left hand side of the main path is a tree whose leaves might suggest that it is a kind of maple, but in fact it is a wild service tree. **17** Service is probably a corruption of sorbus, the name of the family to which it belongs together with the rowan. In spring it is rich with clusters of white flowers. Its small pear-shaped fruits, sometimes called 'chequers' are edible and at one time would have been sold in markets.

Nearby is a remarkable tree, a Caucasian wing-nut **18** which comes from Turkey and neighbouring countries. Its name refers to the fruit, which develop from the long hanging catkins found from April or May. Its leaves are in pairs on long stalks a little like those of the ash-tree. The wing-nut is a kind of walnut tree.



Finally walk up the path towards the scout hut. Among the trees beside the hut are two with very big oak leaves. They are pin oaks, **19** notable not only for their leaves but for the small acorns that sit low in their cups.



For more information about the park, please email  
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