

DUKES 4 TREES

2023 / May 5 / Walk 15



TOP - American fringetree in bloom (Phil Louers)

BOTTOM RIGHT - Ohio buckeye, also called Horse chestnut, in bloom (Julie Makin)

The Blooms Continue...

Several trees have begun to bloom all around campus, the majority of them are white or cream colored. Right now, the Ohio buckeye tree with its upright clusters of white flowers are making a dramatic show. The fringetrees are beginning to show off with their graceful, draping white blooms. There are two kinds of fringetrees on campus, the American fringetree and the Chinese fringetree. The differences are subtle. The native fringe tree flowers before the leaves appear, The Chinese fringetree often flowers after its leaves emerge.



White Spring Bloomers

Black cherry



The native black cherry tree has its own flower show, separate from the early blooms of the non-native cherry trees. The black cherry trees on campus are mature trees and are found in the forested areas on East Campus and in the arboretum. They are easy to spot from a distance right now with their long, pendulous racemes of many small, fragrant, white, 5-petaled flowers. The fruit of the black cherry are enjoyed by wildlife. The pits of the fruit do contain cyanide and the whole plant is considered poisonous to humans, pets and livestock.

Photo: Black cherry tree's drooping white, 5-petaled flowers. (John Hagstrom)

Yellowwood

Not as common on campus, but yet this tree's beauty is underestimated. Its long (12 inch) panicles of white flowers droop downward, adding a graceful touch to whatever landscape it adorns. If you see a yellowwood in bloom, count yourself lucky, the tree is known to bloom sporadically every 2-3 years. It is a perfect tree for urban environments as it is easy to grow in most soil types and none of the plant parts are toxic. The flowers are an important source of food for pollinators too.



Photo: Yellowwood tree's blooming white flowers

Black locust



When blooming it is easy to tell the difference between the black locust and honey locust. The white, pea-like flower clusters hang off the tree branches. It is only found on campus along streams, as it has aggressive root growth and sharp thorns. Both of which are not ideal for urban settings. It is an important wildlife tree. It is a larvae host plant for several species of butterflies, including the Clouded sulphur.

Photo: Black locust tree's flower cluster (Kristine Paulus)

Tulip poplar

Not actually a poplar, this tree is in the Magnolia family. It blooms from May through early June. It is described by naturalist Doug Elliott as, "one of the most dependable sources of nectar in the Southeast. The yield of nectar per bloom is possibly the highest of any plant on the continent and has been calculated at an average of 1.64 grams per flower (that's about one third of a teaspoon)." It is safe to say that pollinators love it!

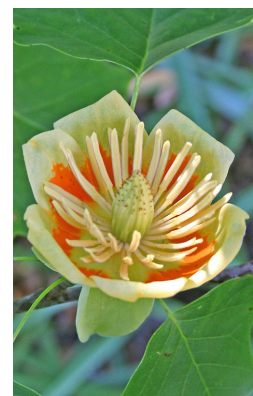


Photo: Tulip poplar's flower (Jeff Franklin)
