Arboretum Tree Walk

1. Memorial Garden

Begin the walk at the Roger Elza Memorial Garden area that includes many holly trees. Dr. Don Roberts, Peggy Kump's husband started a Holly Tree Nursery on the site of the old Kump chicken house after the roof of the chicken house and barn were blown away by a freak tornado c.1963. He loved holly because it was his source of Christmas money when he sold wreaths of holly as a boy growing up in Richwood, WV. Later when he became a local Elkins doctor, he made house calls all over Randolph and surrounding counties, and noticed that holly trees were one of the few trees that did not lose leaves.They made a welcoming spot of color near farm houses among the snowy mountains.

Several of these trees were transplanted from the old nursery. Birds planted holly berries under other trees. Gardener and minister Roger Elza helped to move several of the small holly trees that were hidden from view near the hickory trees up along Seneca Road. Now they are part of Roger's memorial garden.

2. American Holly *(IIex opaca)*

American holly is a broad-leaved evergreen tree that prefers moist soil. Used for holiday decor, its wood is strong and white. It is used for cabinets, piano keys and inlaid work. Leaves provide excellent natural protection against herbivores because of their strong and pointy shape. It rarely exceeds 30 feet in height and 12 inches in diameter. The leaves last about three years before turning yellow and dropping off in the spring.

3. Northern White Cedar *(Thuja occidentalis)*

This evergreen coniferous tree is widely used as an ornamental. Also known as arborvitae, it is slow growing. It is uncommon in WV and more common northeast of the state. It prefers stream banks and swamps, but is sometimes found on rocky hillsides. The leaves are yellow green in color and when crushed, give off a very pleasing aromatic odor.

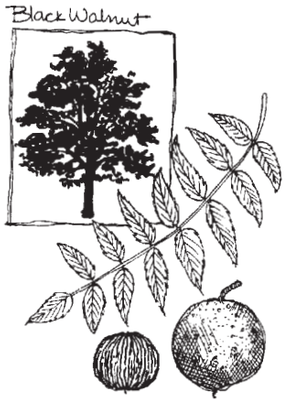
4. Rhododendron *(Rhododendron maximum)*

This particular rhododendron is native to West Virginia, not a hybrid that is often found at greenhouses. The state flower of West Virginia since 1903, is sometimes known as great laurel and once called "deer tongue" laurel. It can reach 30 feet in height and its blooms are white or pale rose. The wood was occasionally used for tool handles. Today, It is used in the making of rustic furniture.

5. Kentucky Coffee Tree *(Gymnocladus dioicus)*

Early settlers used roasted seeds as substitute for coffee especially in hard times. It is a good pollinator tree. With its reputation as a tough species, this is an excellent choice for parks, golf courses and other large areas. It is also widely used as an ornamental or street tree. The tree's picturesque profile stands out and can be attributed to a unique growth habit of coarse, ascending branches that often form a narrow crown.

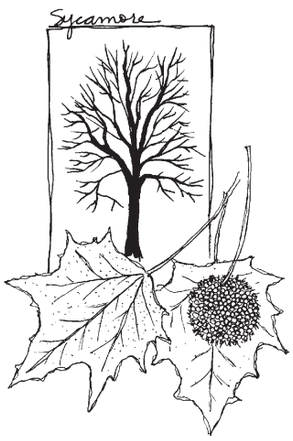
6. Black Walnut *(Juglans nigra)*



Walnut trees are grown for both lumber and food. The wood is superior in color and strength. It was very common amongst firearm manufactures for wood stocks. Their nuts are an excellent food source, but a challenge to get to. It is enclosed in a solid green husk. The nut itself is black with a very hard, thick, finely-ridged shell. The tree prefers rich soil and requires abudance of sun. Unfortunately, the trees can be toxic to certain trees and shrubs—such as serviceberries, chestnuts, pines, arborvitae, apples, cherries, azaleas, rhododendron, lilacs, hydrangeas, and privets—if planted too close.

7. Sycamore *(Platanus occidentalis)*

A great shade tree in parks and along stream banks. It can grow 75-100 feet tall and has a massive trunk. It is sometimes considered the largest hardwood tree in North America. It is very regenerative and commonly found in new log landing sites. The wood is hard, has a beautiful grain and is used for butcher's blocks and furniture. Its bark is unusual. On mature trees the bark is covered with broad curling scales which shed off expposing the smooth white surface beneath.



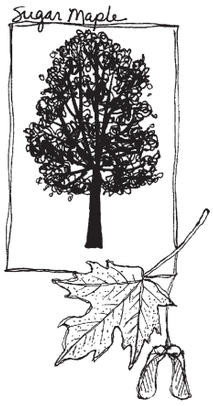
8. White Fir *(Abies concolor)*

Native to the mountains of western North America, this is a popular Christmas tree and hardy ornamental. Long ago, naturalist Donald Peattie recognized the beauty and adaptability of the white fir and accurately predicted that its future "lies in its value as an ornamental." Its shape, color, and ability to thrive on harsh sites has made this tree a favorite for urban landscaping.

▶*Curve to the left and head towards the pavilion, near the wetlands.*

9. Crimson King Maple *(Acer platanoides)*

"Crimson King" was introduced to the U.S. around 1750 as an ornamental shade tree. A variety of Norway Maple, it has maroon-yellow flowers that appear in clusters before the foliage in spring. Its leaves are red in the spring and summer. The fall color of the Crimson King Maple tree is a bronze-yellow. It was once a popular street tree, but this use is not generally recommended for municipalities today.



10. Sugar Maple *(Acer saccharum)*

Sugar maple is the State Tree of West Virginia. The sap is used to make maple syrup. In 1663, chemist Robert Boyle informed Europeans about the tree in the new world that produced this sweet substance. The bark is smooth but will often curl and resemble shagbark hickory bark as it matures. Young sugar maples are commonly browsed by white-tailed deer and snowshoe hare. Squirrels feed on the seeds, buds, twigs and leaves. Its most prominent features are the amazing fall colors of yellow, burnt orange and red.

11. Black Cherry *(Prunus serotina)*

The fruit has a bitter-sweet flavor used to make jelly and wine. In the spring, it has beautiful pink flowers. The tree has a burnt cornflake or rough alligator-looking bark. The wood is very valuable for its luster and color and is used for funiture and interior finishes. At one time cherry and black walnut lumber had the highest unit value than any other hardwood in the U.S.

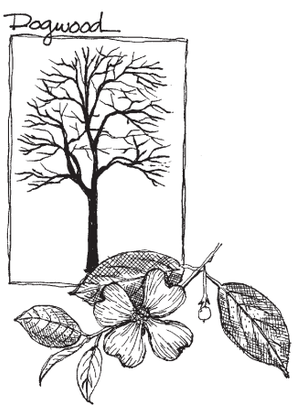
12. American Elm *(Ulmus americana)*

Tucked away behind the black cherry is a rare American elm. This once favorite street tree was once called one of the most magnificent trees in the U.S. and was the famous shade tree of New England. However in the 1960s this species was devasted by Dutch elm disease. Today hybrids make good shade trees. They will often have roots that are referred to as water sprouts shooting from the base to the middle of the tree bark. Its crown has a unique fan shape.

▶ *Turn around and head toward the front entrance sign.*

13. Flowering Dogwood *(Cornus florida var. rubra)*

This particular variety of flowering dogwood produces magnificent blooms in the spring and colorful foliage in the fall. This variety was first recorded by naturalist Marc Catesby in 1731. The tree was soon cultivated and remains highly popular today. It prefers moist soil and partial shade. The pink dogwood is an important source of food for many small birds and mammals including robins, cardinals and waxwings.

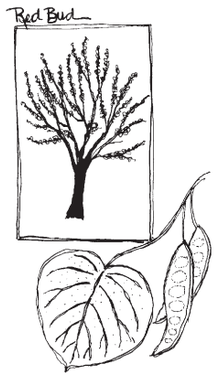


14. Smokey Bear Fire sign

This is a very traditional method of informing the public of fire dangers. If the sign says "LOW" it means the environmental conditions are such that it is unlikely a forest fire will start. If the sign says "HIGH" it means a forest fire could easily start and spread rapidly; any outdoor burning is not recommended. The Elkins Fire Department is responsible for updating this sign.

▶ *Enter the Heirloom Apple Orchard & Redbud Lane.*

The Elkins Tree Board planted many of the apple trees in this orchard focusing on varieties that are known to be particularly hardy and delicious. You may not have heard their names before: Ashmead's Kernel, Baldwin, Black Oxford, Northern Spy and Spitzenburg Espu. Small apple orchards were found at many turn-of-the-century homes, even those in town. After growing up on a farm on the Cacapon River where apple growers had wonderful harvest seasons, H.G. Kump made sure his Elkins home included one.



15. Redbud *(Cercis canadensis)*

This lovely row of redbud trees was planted by Elkins Friends of Trees volunteer Katy McClane. This is a relatively small tree with many medicinal uses. It has beautiful pink-purple flowers in the spring and heart-shaped leaves. The seedpods are a very good identifiable feature on this tree.

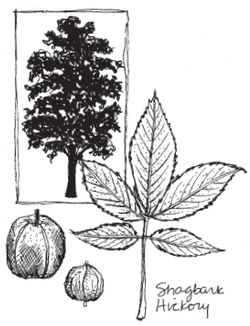
16. Mother Apple *(Malus pumila)*

"Mother" apple tree is an old Massachusetts variety that was once considered "one of the prized apples of all orchards." It almost disappeared from cultivation in America in the 20th century. It is a good choice for cider, cooking and eating fresh.

▶ *Continue straight to the hickory grove at back of the parking area.*

17. Shagbark Hickory *(Carya ovata)* & Mockernut Hickory *(Carya tomentosa)*

The shagbark is a long lived tree that derives its name from its shaggy bark on mature trees. It is used by small mammals such as bats because its bark provides excellent shelter. Next to the shagbark hickories on the right, is an unusual Mockernut Hickory; a large, broadly rounded tree at maturity. It has tight "X" shaped bark and is commonly found with sap rings. There are usually seven leaflets on its compound leaf.



▶ *Turn around and head toward the Kump House.*

18. Flame Azalea *(Rhododendron calendulaceum)*

Dr. Roberts expanded his holly nursery to include azalea clippings because they were such a delight along the roadside when he was driving in the country on house calls in the springtime. He loved to cross pollinate native orange and pink azaleas to see how he could create new azalea colors. He joked that people thought he was a three-hundred-pound bumble bee serving as a pollinator, and he developed some beautiful bushes (such as the one on left protected by deer fencing) which blooms in late May.

19. Elkins Tree Nursery

Elkins Tree Board and Elkins Friends of Trees volunteers maintain this nursery which provides trees for city properties as well as for city residents as part of the Adopt-A-Tree program.

▶ *Return to the beginning of the walk, near the pavilion.*

20. Wetlands

The wetlands area is filled with Weeping Willows, Sycamores and River Birch. Many were planted by Elkins Tree Board and Friends of Trees volunteers and by AFNHA AmeriCorps members as part of a wetland restoration project. Future plans for this area include wetlands access improvements and interpretive signage.