

Oak Lawn’s Arboretum



In 2014 Oak Lawn Cemetery was awarded Level I Accreditation as an Arboretum by the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program and is now recognized as an accredited arboretum in the Morton Register of Arboreta. The mission of an arboretum is to collect trees, shrubs and other woody plants for the benefit of the public, science and conservation. Oak Lawn is only the second facility in the State of Connecticut, along with Connecticut College, and the only cemetery in the State, to achieve this distinction. The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program is sponsored and coordinated by The Morton Arboretum in cooperation with American Public Gardens Association and Botanic Gardens Conservation International. This international initiative offers four levels of accreditation, recognizing arboreta of various degrees of development, capacity and professionalism. Accreditation is based on self-assessment and documentation of an arboretum’s level of achievement of accreditation standards. Standards include planning, governance, labeling of species, staff and volunteer support, public access and programming, tree science, planting and conservation.



Oak Lawn Cemetery Association was incorporated in 1865. Its name resulted from a fortunate coincidence: in the nineteenth century, Americans regarded the oak and the acorn as symbols of immortality; and, by chance, across Bronson Road from the cemetery entrance towered a stately oak tree– subsequent generations would know it as the “Cemetery Oak”. The founders thought the name a logical choice. It was their intention that the grounds serve as a botanical garden in the sense that, while it was to be a natural place, it was to be a carefully designed place, a planned landscape and park-like setting. Oak Lawn Cemetery was, from the first, intended to attract visitors, not turn them away. (excerpts from *Thomas J. Farnham, The Oak Lawn Cemetery, 1993.*)

Oak Lawn Cemetery is a non-sectarian cemetery located on a 100 acre natural setting. Its historic grounds include more than five miles of paved roads and consist of well-maintained mature trees and shrubs as well as wetlands, woodlands and wildlife preserves. It is bordered by the Mill River on the southeast. In 1907, at the urging of Mable Osgood Wright, a naturalist and founder of the Connecticut Audubon Society, a program was undertaken by the Board of Directors to improve and beautify the cemetery grounds beginning with the planting of oak trees along the river bank. This program has continued throughout the years with a long-range plan for the preservation and propagation of its plantings in order to enhance its park-like setting, not only for the benefit of its deceased residents and their families but also for the enjoyment and education of the general public. Furthering the mission, the current Board of Directors has established an arboretum committee to oversee the maintenance of its existing collection as well as long-range planning to enrich the character of the grounds.



Oak Lawn Cemetery and Arboretum

Founded 1865

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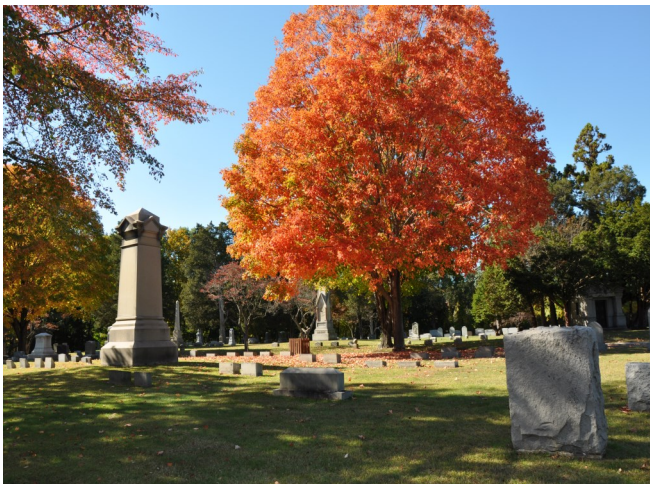
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Oak Lawn Cemetery Walking Tree Tour



Oak Lawn Cemetery is graced with a magnificent collection of mature trees, many of which are unique specimens of their species. This guide is designed as a walking tour of some of these specimens which have been tagged with botanical signs and green numbered tags corresponding to their location on this brochure’s map. This walking tour is 0.7 miles in length and can be completed within 30 minutes. It was designed to highlight some of the more spectacular tree specimens that can be found on these grounds.



1. Flowering dogwood: Our tour begins at the island in front of the office building, a marble structure designed by Cameron Clark in 1955. In the center of this island is a wonderful example of a mature **flowering dogwood** (*Cornus florida*) which is native to North America. The historically famous dogwoods of Greenfield Hill have been continuously planted since the late 18th Century beginning in 1795 with the plantings by Dr. Isaac Bronson along what is now Bronson Rd.. This specimen is approximately 50 years old and is unusually well preserved for its age.

2. Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) is native to the forests of North America and one of the largest and most popular of the hardwoods. Also known as rock maple it is best known for its bright fall foliage and is a primary source for maple syrup.

3. White ash (*Fraxinus americana*) is also known as American ash. The wood of the ash is valued for its strength and hardness and has been used extensively for tool handles and baseball bats. In recent years this species has been decimated by an invasive beetle, emerald ash borer, which was accidently introduced from Asia in the 1990’s.

4. Dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) is a fast-growing deciduous, coniferous tree. A native of China, it is an ancient tree that knew the dinosaurs. From fossil records, it is known to have existed 50 million years ago. Although related to the giant sequoia of California, it differs in that it is deciduous, losing its needles in the Fall. Given the fact that this species can grow to 200 feet in height and 6 feet in diameter, it was recently transplanted to this grove to provide more space and 2 other smaller specimens were added to the collection.

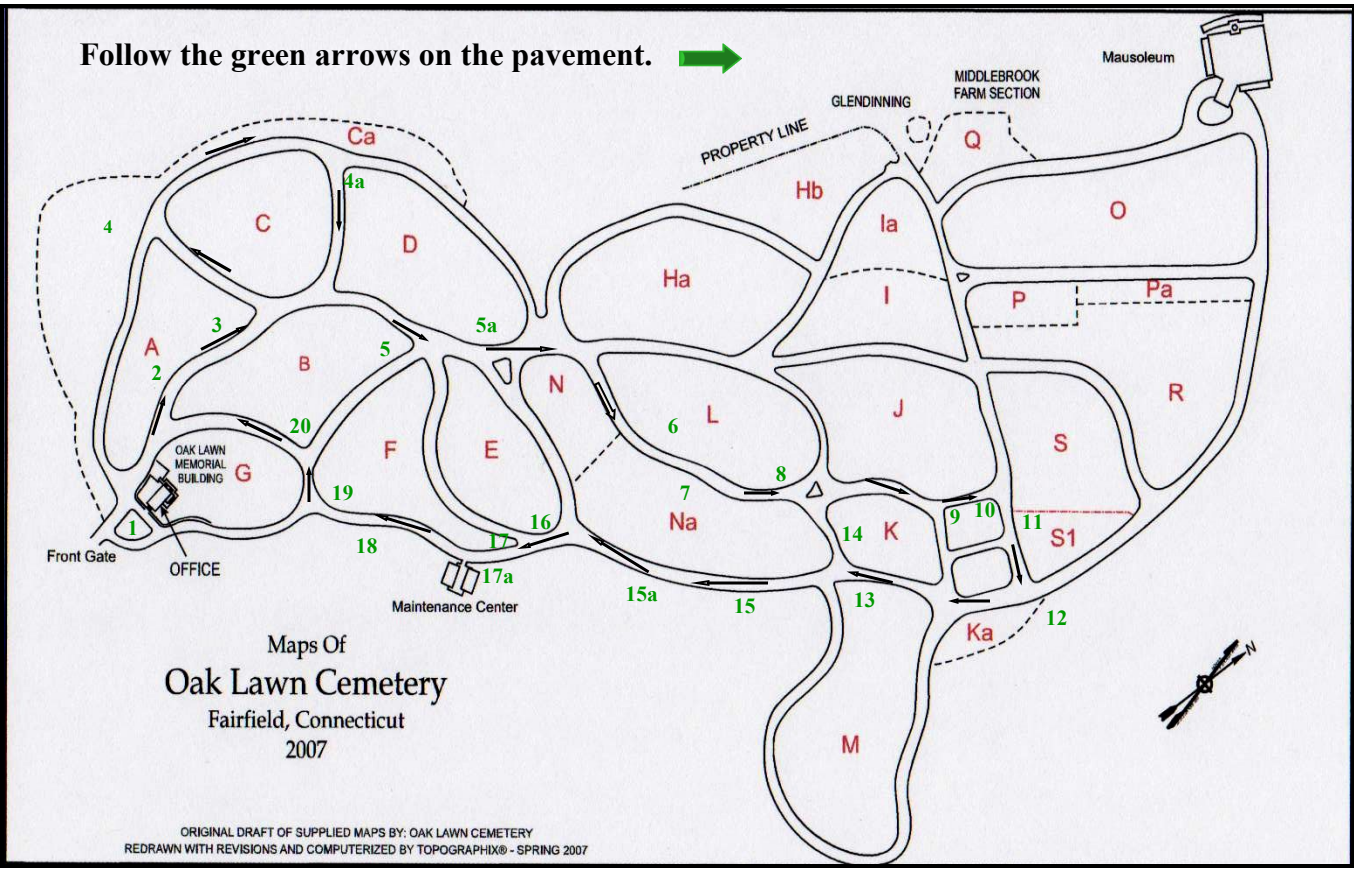
4a. Golden Larch (*Pseudolarix amabilis*) is another deciduous conifer in this collection. Also a native of China it can reach heights of 130 feet. The leaves are a bright green which turn a brilliant golden yellow in the autumn, hence the common name. It is a very attractive ornamental tree for parks and large gardens.

5. Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*) is a spectacular aristocratic tree native to Japan, nearby Korea and China which has been widely cultivated and planted as an ornamental throughout the Northern Hemisphere. They are renowned for their exquisite fall colors in red, orange or yellow.

5a. Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*) is a coniferous tree in the cypress family. Arborvitae means ‘tree of life’. They are found primarily throughout eastern Canada and the northeastern United States. They have an important role in the wild. Its leaves are one of the most popular evergreens eaten by deer and other mammals during the winter & their dense canopy provides cover for birds and mammals year round.

6. Black tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*) also known as black gum or *pepperidge* tree, is one of the most attractive trees around. Pepperidge Farm Bakery in Norwalk, CT was named for this tree which was growing on the founder’s family property in Fairfield. Native to North America, its summer leaves are a dark green with a high-gloss appearance, but the most spectacular part of this tree is the fall foliage with many different shades from purple to bright scarlet. Its flowers are an important source of honey and its fruit is very popular with small bird species, especially the American robin.

7. Swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*) is a medium-sized, rapid growing tree of America’s north central and northeastern forests reaching 60 to 80 feet tall. They can live up to 350 years. It is a striking tree with attractive peeling bark, especially on young trees. The lustrous, lobed leaves have a two-tone appearance, dark green on top with a silvery-white underside. Fall color is an orangeish-gold to yellow in mid-autumn and serves as an excellent shade tree. The acorns are sweet and are an important food for wildlife such as squirrels, mice, deer, and a variety of birds, including ducks and turkey.



8. Honeylocust (*Gleditsia triacanthos var. inermis*) is a deciduous tree native to central North America. It typically grows 60-80 feet tall with a rounded spreading crown. It is a fast growing tree with fragrant spring flowers and an open silhouette permitting grass to grow underneath. Usually found with stout thorns on its trunk and branches, this specimen is a thornless variety.

9. Black oak (*Quercus velutina*) is a common medium-sized to large oak found in the eastern and mid-western United States. It is sometimes referred to as yellow or yellowbark oak and is a good food source for wildlife.

10. European copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica var. purpurea*), is a large tree with a stout trunk resembling an elephant’s foot, the bark being light grey and smooth with a somewhat wrinkled appearance. They are commonly used in extensive gardens, large estates and parks. It takes 30 years to reach maturity and can live for over 200 years.

11. Red oak (*Quercus rubra*), commonly called the northern red oak or champion oak, is native to North America. Dark luscious green leaves turn brownish-red in autumn. The bark of this tree is unique with shiny stripes down the center of the ridges all the way down the trunk. A famous large northern red oak in Ashford, CT is 26 feet in circumference and “a sight to behold”.

12. American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) is one of the largest hardwoods reaching 130 feet high and 10 feet in diameter. It can be easily distinguished by its mottled exfoliating bark which flakes off in great irregular masses, leaving the surface a mottled greenish-white, gray and brown, accounting for its other name, buttonwood. The Pinchot sycamore in Simsbury, CT is the largest tree in the state and estimated to be at least 200 years old.

13. Sawara falsecypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera*), also known as Japanese cypress, is native to southern Japan. It is a slow-growing coniferous tree with a beautiful fern-like quality of its foliage and a rich cinnamon-colored bark. They are considerably important as ornamental trees.

14. Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) is native to eastern North America. It is actually a juniper, not a true cedar, however, “Red Cedar” is the most used common name. They are a dense slow-growing coniferous evergreen which are important providers of cover for birds and small mammals, as well as nest sites. The aromatic heartwood is commonly used for cedar chests.

15. American elm (*Ulmus americana*) is a species native to North America. It was once one of America’s most dominant trees until the arrival of Dutch elm disease. They were widely used along streets as shade trees. A great example of these magnificent trees can be found today along the Mall at Central Park in New York City and the New Haven Green. We have recently lost the native elm at this site to this disease and have planted a disease resistant cultivar, ‘Morton glossy’.

15a. Japanese stewartia (*Stewartia pseudocamelia*) is native to Japan and Korea. It is an attractive ornamental deciduous tree often with multiple stems or low branching trunks.

16. Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) is a large pine native to eastern North America. White pine forests originally covered much of the Northeast but today only one percent of the old-growth forests remain after the extensive logging of the 18th to early 20th century. These trees are the tallest in this region reaching over 100 feet and in the past had been used for ship masts. During colonial times they were marked by British agents to be preserved for the British Royal Navy, a point of great contention among the colonists playing a significant role leading to the American Revolution.

17. Shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*) is native to eastern United States and Canada. They are easy to recognize by their shaggy bark, which is only found on mature trees. The hickory’s nut is edible with a very sweet taste. It was an important food source to Native Americans and early settlers and continues to be a food source for wildlife. The wood is very tough and was used for tools requiring strength such as axles, handles, ploughs and skis. Andrew Jackson, 7th president of the U. S., was known as “Old Hickory” in recognition of his tough character.

17a. Persian ironwood (*Parrotia persica*) is native to northern Iran. It has a smooth pinkish-brown flaking bark leaving interesting patches of cinnamon, pink, green and yellow.

18. Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) is native to the mountains of northern and central Europe, commonly referred to as the European spruce. It is the fastest growing of the spruces with strong graceful branches covered with dark green needles and serves as an ideal windbreaker. This species has a reddish bark, giving it the nickname of “red fir”, which flakes off in scales as the tree matures. The wood is of importance in the manufacture of pulp and paper.

19. Scarlet oak (*Quercus coccinea*) is another native of the eastern United States. It is a medium-sized deciduous tree with a rounded open habit which eventually matures to 70 feet tall. The common name is derived from the autumn coloration of the foliage, generally becoming deep scarlet.

20. Austrian pine (*Pinus nigra*) is native to central and southeastern Europe. Combined with the dark green needles, the dense habit makes for an outstanding specimen tree. The pyramidal crown which becomes flat topped and somewhat irregular on older trees (as in this specimen) is comprised of thick horizontal branches sweeping horizontally and up as they spread from the trunk. The dark furrowed bark is very attractive, particularly on older trees. This particular specimen is among one of the largest in Connecticut and is listed as one of Connecticut’s most notable trees.