

The Search for the Big Trees

An Adventure in
Environmental Awareness



BIODIVERSITY ON THE MOUNTAIN
SEWANEE HERBARIUM
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

May, 2002

The adventure: to uncover the answers to these questions...

- How many tree species do we have in our area?
- What is the largest tree of each species?
- What is the very largest tree in our area?
- Where are these trees located?
- Why are trees important?

Sewanee's Search for the Big Trees began in the winter of 2001 as the brainchild of biology professor *emeritus* George Ramseur. Sponsored by the Sewanee Herbarium and Tree City USA, the Search was launched, and with the help of sharp-eyed community members the data began to come in. Total results are tabulated on the Sewanee Herbarium website at <www.sewanee.edu/biology/herbarium/bigtrees>.

The trees are categorized by location: on the campus of The University of the South or in the town of Sewanee; in the natural areas on the Domain of The University of the South; and in other areas outside of the Domain. To date, 55 species have documented champions. Some of them are highlighted in this brochure.

The very largest tree in our area is a spectacular yellow-poplar located in the woods off Prince Lane in Sewanee. Although it is surrounded by a tangle of vines, one can tell by its form that it once was the focal point of a homeowner's yard.

The Top Ten Champions

Each is the largest tree documented for its species.

<u>Species and Location</u>	<u>Circumference</u>
1. Tulip-poplar (<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>), Prince Lane, Sewanee	19'4"
2. Southern catalpa (<i>Catalpa speciosa</i>), St. Mary's Convent, Sewanee	17'9"
3. American sycamore (<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>), Laurel Creek, Lost Cove	15'8"
4. White oak (<i>Quercus alba</i>), Prince Lane, Sewanee	15'2"
5. Eastern Hemlock (<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>), Fiery Gizzard, Tracy City	12'11"
6. Sugar maple (<i>Acer saccharum</i>), Otey Parish rectory, Sewanee	12'10"
Black oak (<i>Quercus velutina</i>), St. Mary's Convent, Sewanee	12'10"
7. Silver maple (<i>Acer saccharinum</i>), Hoffman dormitory, Sewanee	12'7"
8. White ash (<i>Fraxinus americana</i>), Old Dairy Farm, Sewanee	12'
9. Chestnut oak (<i>Quercus prinus</i>), Tennessee Avenue, Sewanee	11'3"
10. Loblolly pine (<i>Pinus taeda</i>), Holder's Cove, Winchester	11'

More Champions

<u>Species and Location</u>	<u>Circumference</u>
Basswood (<i>Tilia heterophylla</i>), Shakerag Hollow, Sewanee	10'2"
Birch, yellow (<i>Betula allegheniensis</i>), Fiery Gizzard, Tracy City	3'8"
Buckeye (<i>Aesculus flava</i>), Shakerag Hollow, Sewanee	10'2"
Cherry, black (<i>Prunus serotina</i>), Virginia Ave., Sewanee	8'4"
Dogwood, flowering (<i>Cornus florida</i>), St. Luke's, Sewanee	3'2"
Elm, American (<i>Ulmus americana</i>), Rebel's Rest, Sewanee	9'2"
Hickory, shagbark (<i>Carya ovata</i>), Bridal Veil Falls, Sewanee	7'4"
Holly, American (<i>Ilex opaca</i>), Roark's Cove Rd., Sewanee	3'8"
Locust, honey (<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>), Little Tuckaway, Sewanee	9'8"
Magnolia, bigleaf (<i>Magnolia macrophylla</i>), Fiery Gizzard, Tracy City	3'2"
Maple, red (<i>Acer rubrum</i>), Walsh-Ellett Hall, Sewanee	9'2"
Oak, chinquapin (<i>Quercus muhlenbergii</i>), Shakerag Hollow, Sewanee	10'9"
Persimmon (<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>), Shakerag Hollow, Sewanee	5'6"
Pine, Virginia (<i>Pinus virginiana</i>), S. Pittsburg Hwy, Sewanee	8'8"
Redbud (<i>Cercis canadensis</i>), Morgan's Steep Rd., Sewanee	4'8"
Sassafras (<i>Sassafras albidum</i>), Old Farm Road, Sewanee	2'7"
Serviceberry (<i>Amelanchier arborea</i>), Proctors Hall Rd., Sewanee	1'10"
Sweetgum (<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>), St. Mary's Convent, Sewanee	8'4"
Tree-of-Heaven (<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>), Fulford Hall, Sewanee	11'
Walnut, black (<i>Juglans nigra</i>), Mikell Lane, Sewanee	9'5"
Witch-hazel (<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>), Shakerag Hollow, Sewanee	6"

The trunk circumference is measured 4.5 feet above the ground.

The adventure continues . . .

Sewanee's Big Tree Project is our way of paying tribute to these great "friends in the round" so we can earmark these giants for all to appreciate and admire. Each nominee represents the importance of our natural heritage, the beauty of our surroundings, and the benefits that all trees provide for us.

It is our hope that this project will translate into a broader understanding of conservation and preservation issues in this part of the world.

The hunt is not over by any means. Do you know of a potential champion—a larger tree in any of the categories or a big one of any other species on the Domain or in the vicinity?

If so, let us know:

Sandy Baird
<sbairds@edge.net>

George Ramseur
<gramseur@sewanee.edu>

Sewanee Herbarium
(931) 598-1798

National Register of Big Trees

Since 1940, the American Forestry Association has been documenting the largest known specimen of each native and naturalized tree in the United States, using a point system based on total height, trunk diameter, and crown size. Their National Register of Big Trees, which lists hundreds of trees, is described at <www.americanforests.org>. Of the original champions that were listed in 1940, these four continue to reign:

Giant sequoia ("General Sherman")
Sequoia National Park, CA (85'4")

Rocky Mountain juniper ("Jardine Juniper")
Cache National Forest, UT (20'7")

Western juniper ("Bennett Juniper")
Stanislaus National Forest, CA (40'0")

White oak ("Wye Oak")
Wye Mills State Park, MD (31'9")



Nomenclature follows Kartesz, John T. 1999. *Synthesis of the North American Flora* [computer file]. North Carolina Botanical Garden, Chapel Hill.

All Big Tree data are tabulated on the Sewanee Herbarium website at <www.sewanee.edu/biology/herbarium/bigtrees>.

This *Biodiversity on the Mountain* series is produced by the Department of Biology of the University of the South. This brochure was prepared by Sandy Baird, George Ramseur, Mary Priestley, and Rachel Petropoulos.

Artist Kathryn Ramseur-Riley created the logo for *The Search For the Big Trees*.

