



TOWER GROVE  
— PARK —

# TREE WALK TIPS

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## OVERVIEW

Trees are some of the most important plants with which we share the planet. They provide shade, oxygen, habitats, and resources. Henry Shaw recognized this in his planning of Tower Grove Park. Originally open Missouri prairie, Shaw envisioned the land of Tower Grove Park to be filled with “the finest and best trees adapted to the soil and climate of Missouri.” Now, designated with a level II arboretum status Tower Grove Park continues to hold trees as integral to the historic beauty and life of the Park.

Teaching young learners to understand and identify some of the most common trees in the Park is a great way to immerse them in the natural world and educate them about our place in it. To the untrained eye trees can all seem the same, yet with a little practice, learners can see them as distinct entities, notice subtle differences, and cultivate a lifelong interest in trees. Tower Grove Park hopes to generate interest in our trees among our visitors with the hopes of instilling an ethos of stewardship for the Park, as well as our surrounding neighborhoods.

## WHY IDENTIFY TREES?

There are many reasons for people to identify trees. Having knowledge about which trees grow in a certain area can give clues to the types of environmental conditions presents, such as soil and climate. Trees provide food and shelter for animals and so knowing the type of tree can lead to predictions about what animals may be present. Sometimes various plants depend on the shade of certain types of trees. Occasionally, non-native trees become invasive in areas and need to be removed to allow the survival of the other trees around. In all these instances, being able to identify trees correctly can be telling about the surrounding areas and situations.

## AGE

3-12

## SPECIAL NOTE

Please be respectful when interacting with nature in the Park. Be cautious not to disturb the habitats of plants or animals. Please be careful when observing unknown plants or animals as they may be harmful. Thank you for doing your part to maintain the integrity of the Park.

## PROCEDURE

1. As you are walking around Tower Grove Park, point out and visit a specific tree. There are Tower Grove Park specific tree walks available on our website.
2. Before you begin, ask your learner, how do you generally tell one tree apart from another? Brainstorm answers with them. These may include: color, shape of tree, shape of leaves, bark texture, features like flowers, fruit, nuts, cones. . .
3. Ask your learner to make observations about the tree. Have them share their observations with you. Help direct their observations by using guiding questions like:
  - Where is the tree located? Are you up on a hill or down low by a stream?
  - What does the surrounding area look like? Are there other trees close by or is this tree alone?
  - How is the tree shaped? Is it circular on top? Is the shape triangular? Is it tall or short? Is the tree skinny or wide around?
  - What does the bark look like? Describe the texture – rough, smooth, etc.
  - How do the leaves appear? Describe the color, shape, size, pattern on the twig, etc.
  - What other features stick out about the tree? Does the tree have flowers, fruits, nuts, or cones?

**VARIATION:** Depending on the skill level of your learner, have them create a tree walk observation notebook. They can write down their observations and make a drawing of what they see.

4. Reveal the name of the tree to your learner and any additional facts they might like to know. Now, see if they can find the same tree elsewhere in the Park, if possible.

**VARIATION:** Don't outwardly reveal the name of the tree to your learner. Instead, give them a tree field guide to take their observations and match with a tree that fits these observations. Visit the following sites for well-prepared tree field guides:

Missouri Department of Conservation – <https://nature.mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/search>.

Missouri Botanical Garden – <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plantfinder/plantfindersearch.aspx>.

Fifty Common Trees of Missouri – <https://pages.wustl.edu/files/pages/imce.mnh/50-common-trees-of-missouri.pdf>.

## **MORE VARIATIONS**

For younger participants, engage them with the following suggestions:

- Make leaf or bark rubbings. This requires crayons and paper.
- Collect leaves, twigs, flowers, fruits, nuts, or cones from around the tree. See if they can match these items with a couple tree field guide options that you give.
- Make a drawing or find the tree in a coloring page.
- Put together a leaf field guide for your learner and have them color in the leaf picture once they have properly identified the tree.

## **COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS**

Please share your feedback! Tell me about your successes, failures, or possibly new variations you have come up with. Email the Education Coordinator at [lsawyer@towergrovepark.org](mailto:lsawyer@towergrovepark.org).