

Friends of Arlington Parks

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State Champion Trees Identified in Arlington

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources (DPRCR) has announced the identification of several state champion or co-champion trees in Arlington. A state champion is the tree of a particular species that scores the most points using a formula that takes into account the girth of the trunk, the height of the tree, and the spread of the crown. When two trees have comparable scores, they are certified as co-champions.

Most of these trees were found in the course of a natural resources survey coordinated by park naturalist Greg Zell. The survey includes inventories of trees in 30 Arlington parks or school properties, at Arlington Cemetery and two private cemeteries, along the W&OD Trail, and on private properties. Altogether, some 800 trees have been documented and measured.

The survey has identified 64 *county champions*, the largest trees of their species in Arlington. Some of those county champions have also qualified as state champions, co-champions, or runners-up:

* Seven Arlington trees have been certified or nominated as *state champions* or *co-champions*: a Mockernut hickory (*Carya tomentosa*), a post oak (*Quercus stellata*), a sawtooth oak (*Quercus acutissima*), a water oak (*Quercus nigra*), a princess tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*), an American holly (*Ilex opaca*), and a deodora cedar (*Cedrus deodora*). The cedar, which had been certified earlier as state champion, was re-measured and re-certified.



Naturalist Greg Zell next to Arlington's largest tree

* Six Arlington trees have been certified or nominated as *runner-up state champions* (second largest in the state): a sawtooth oak (*Quercus acutissima*), a water oak (*Quercus nigra*), a Virginia pine (*Pinus Virginiana*), a yellowwood (*Cladrastris lutea*), a black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), and an alternate-leaved dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*).

The dogwood on the runner-up list is not the species that produces the Virginia state flower; the state “flower” is the blossom of the flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) and not really a flower at all.

In addition to Arlington’s state champions and runners-up, the 64 county champions include trees that are among the oldest and largest in the region. For example, the largest tree in Arlington is a tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) at Ft. C. F. Smith, with a height of 150 ft. and trunk girth of almost 21 ft.! See the photo on page 1, which shows naturalist Greg Zell sitting next to this giant after measuring it.

The natural resources survey represents the first step in implementing key provisions of the Public Spaces Master Plan (PSMP) adopted last December. The PSMP identifies protection of the County’s natural resources as a top priority and calls for development of a natural resource policy and management plan. As a basis for developing that plan, County staff and citizen volunteers need to know what natural resources remain in Arlington and where they are. The survey, together with other activities of County naturalists and urban foresters, is providing a body of information that is bringing us closer to those goals.

For further information on the natural resources survey, including trees mentioned in this article, contact Steve Temmermand, Parks and Natural Resources Division Chief, at Stemme@arlingtonva.us or 703-228-7748.

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