

Park Map

PIEDMONT PARK
CONSERVANCY

Woods and Groves Walking Tour

Piedmont Park Tour Route, 1.7 miles

Start at the bottom level of the parking garage. Stops are shown in orange boxes.

Stops

- 1 Six Springs Wetland overlook
- 2 Gravel track at north end of Active Oval
- 3 Sidewalk in front of Greystone
- 4 Mayors Monument at Mayors Grove Playground
- 5 Active Oval Road at Noguchi Playscape
- 6 Leaders Grove

- Walking directions are included in the tour.
- Bark and leaf photos are provided, but we suggest you bring your own field guide to trees.
- Restrooms are located at the playgrounds and the tennis center.

More Trees

Blue boxes with initials (WW) on the map refer to groves described on p. 7, but not part of the tour.



Tree Plantings

Piedmont Park had 1416 trees in 2000; since then, the Piedmont Park Conservancy has planted 1083 more trees.

Woods and Groves

Introduction

Some of Piedmont Park's oldest and largest trees grow in the self-sustaining woods scattered across the northern half of the park. But other outstanding specimens live in planted groves developed in the southern half of the park after 1909. Learn about these woods and groves in this self-guided tour with walking directions and a map. (*Questions for children are included in italics.*)

Stop 1 Directions (See map page)

Start your tour at the bottom level of the parking deck at Piedmont Park. Walk from the deck to the asphalt path above Six Springs Wetland:

- Walk straight from the garage down the steps or ramp to the path. From the steps, turn right toward the lake.
- Walk about 100 yards then take the first left on the path toward the lake. As you walk, woods will be on your left and the bocce court on your right.
- Turn left at the next path intersection, heading toward the bridge out of the park.
- Follow the asphalt path about 50 feet while studying the trees in the wetland below.

Wetland Woods, circa 1870

These woods have changed little since Native Americans hunted and gathered food along Clear Creek before 1820. Individual trees die, but new saplings are always growing from the seeds and acorns of mature trees. Below you now are a number of inconspicuous small trees, including beeches, hickories and sweetgums, that may one day grow as large as the trees that now tower above them.

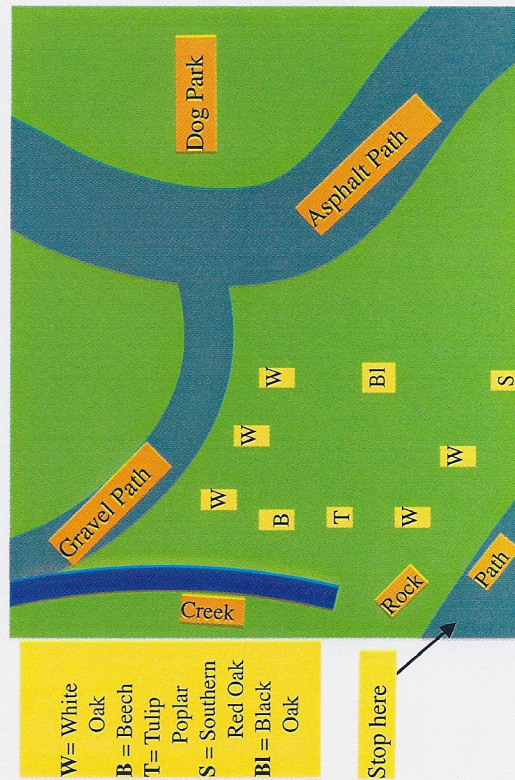
After the Creek Indians ceded their land to Georgia in 1821, white settlers disturbed this reseeded of the forest more than the Creeks, but they did not disrupt it altogether. Elijah Paty settled here in the 1830s, then two generations of the Walker family farmed land that is now Piedmont Park from 1830 to 1887. The farmers usually girdled and burned trees in valleys like this one to turn the rich bottomland soil where the trees grew into fields. Because this

particular bottomland was laced with six spring creeks, though, it was too wet for farm fields, so the woods were spared. Stone from these woods was quarried for the 1895 Cotton States Exposition walls still visible around the park, but otherwise the woods remained undisturbed.

If you look at the steep north-facing hillside below, you will see nine huge trees (yellow boxes on the map below). Most species represented--White Oak, Tulip Poplar, Southern Red Oak, American Beech--are common in the canopy of mixed deciduous woods in Atlanta. These trees are likely to be over 100 years old since the stump of a nearby White Oak in the Wetland had a ring count of 160 years. You can use the map below as well as leaf and bark images on the next page to identify five more White Oaks that may be just as old.

A diverse understory of midsize trees is also a sign of a healthy mixed deciduous woods in the Eastern U.S. Understory trees, such as Sassafras, Boxelder, and Dogwood, are visible from here. Look for them along the top edge of the woods running from the rock to your right.

Wetland Woods Overlook

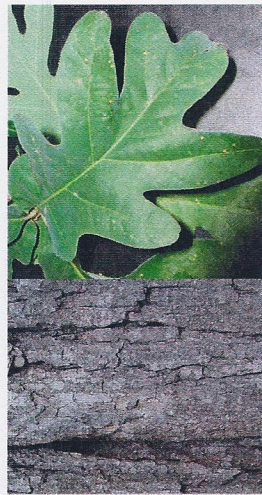


Woods and Groves



Tuliptree *Liriodendron tulipifera*

Furrowed bark, 2 in. flowers, 3-6 in. leaves, 90 ft tall, straight trunk (Tulip Poplar, Yellow Poplar)



Eastern White Oak *Quercus alba*

Light gray, papery bark in blocks, 6-9 in. leaves tapering to base, tall, straight trunk, broad crown



American Beech *Fagus grandifolia*

Silver gray, smooth bark, 4 in. toothed leaves in 2 rows, low branches, yellow winter leaves

Why do people call *Liriodendron tulipifera* (pictured top left) a tulip tree or tulip poplar? (Answers, p. 7)

Stop 2 Directions

Walk from the Six Springs Wetland overlook to the north end of the track above the soccer fields:

- Turn around and walk back the way you came on the asphalt path.
- Walk toward the cement steps in the distance with the lake on your left.
- Pass the stone steps on your right, continuing around the base of the hill, curving right and uphill to the Tennis Center.
- Continue past the Tennis Center building on your right, then turn left on the wide path that leads to the gravel track around the Oval.
- Turn right onto the Oval track. Walk about 20 yards on the track above the soccer field, and stop by the tall trees on the right of the track. You may want to sit at the picnic table.

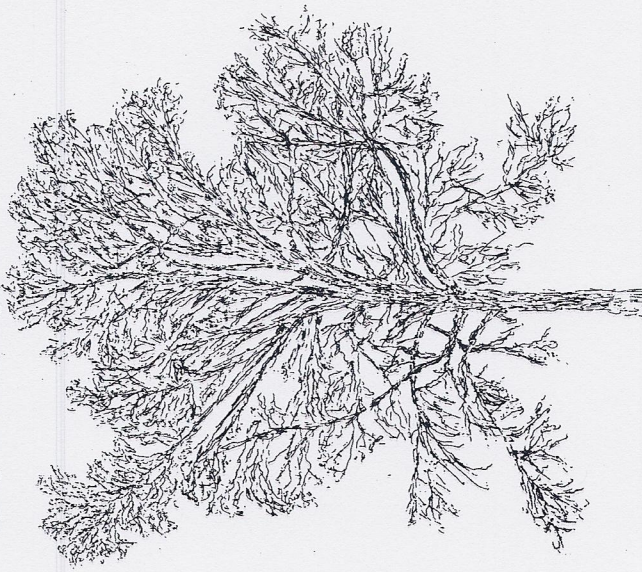
Exposition Woods, 1895

In 1887, Benjamin Walker sold his farm to a private company that staged an exposition on the property in 1895. The largest exhibition building at the fair replaced the 400-tree orchard Walker had on the site of the present-day tennis courts, but photos of the Exposition show that many small oaks from the native woods on his farm still grew on the hillsides

below the enormous building.

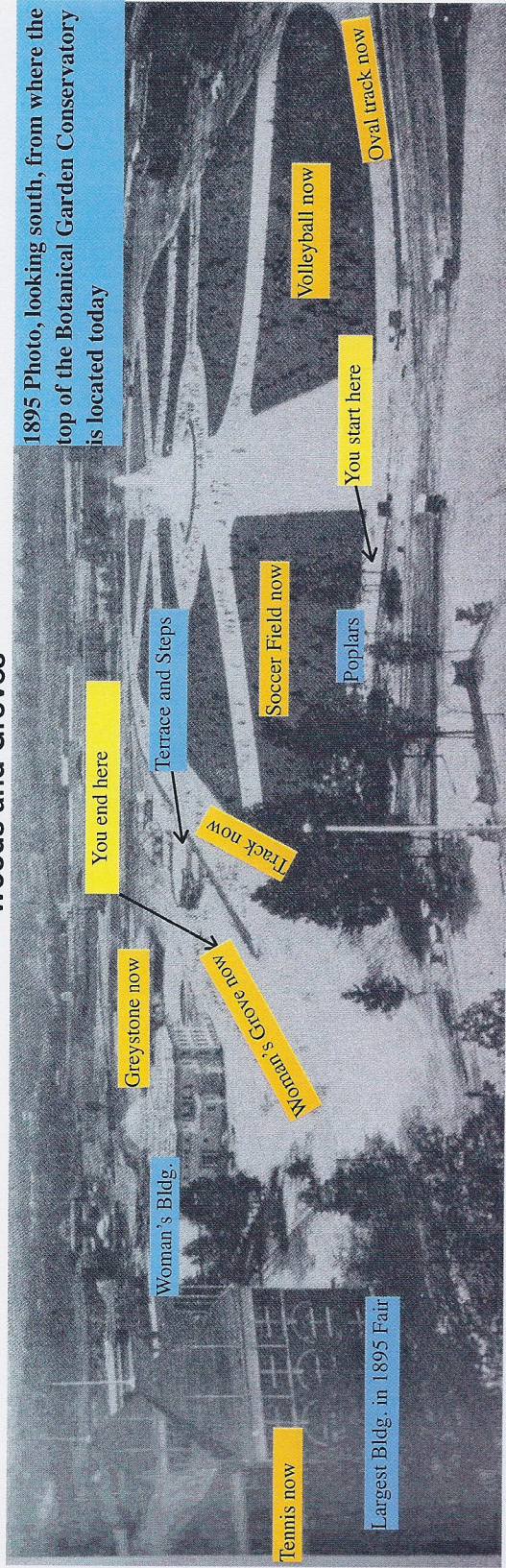
A small grove of poplars was also visible in photos of the 1895 exposition plaza that filled the space where the playing fields are now. That poplar grove grew into the huge trees near you that are best seen from the picnic table.

It is likely the oak and poplar saplings in the 1895 photos once grew in native woods similar to the wetland woods we just saw. The larger trees were cut to make way for the exposition, but the young trees were spared. Now those saplings have become giants.



White Oaks like this one (visible just right of the Tennis Center building as you walk back on the track) can live to be 450 years old. If this oak was a sapling in 1895, how old is it now?

Woods and Groves



Stop 3 Directions

Walk from the track at the top of the oval to the sidewalk in front of Greystone. Use the 1895 photo shown here to guide you from the yellow start box to the end box. Blue boxes list 1895 features and orange ones list present-day features:

- Walk along the gravel track back toward the tennis courts.
- Follow the curving track south, soccer field on your right.
- Turn left at the semicircular stone terrace with the statue of Sidney Lanier.
- Take the steps to the left of the Lanier statue.
- At the bottom of the steps, bear left on the sidewalk at the Y intersection and walk straight along the sidewalk about halfway to the street. (See the map on the next page.)

Woman's Grove, 1909

This photo from the Cotton States Exposition in 1895 shows that the track you just followed was once the route of a promenade around the main oval in 1895. Now you are standing close to where the Woman's Building was located during the Exposition.

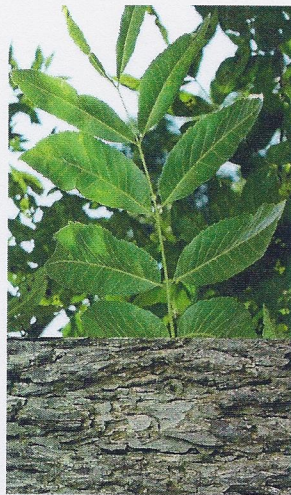
Note how few trees grew in the 1895 fairground. The familiar groves of trees that we associate with Piedmont Park were almost all planted after the fairground era ended in 1909. The 1895 exposition contained nearly 100 buildings, so there was little room for trees. But in one hall, the Woman's

Building (pictured left center), clubwomen from all over the U.S. were discussing the need to plant groves in public spaces, so a plan emerged among Atlanta women to make Piedmont Park green again. The women took over ten years to bring that plan to fruition because the city had to buy the fairground from private owners, then build a consensus for turning the fairground with its dilapidated exhibition halls into a recreational park.

The first grove established was near the site of the Woman's Building after it was torn down in 1909. The Atlanta Women's Club enlisted high school girls to plant fourteen pecans (3 remain, see the map of the grove on the next page). Pecans were a commercial crop in Georgia, so the trees symbolized the new South celebrated at the 1895 Exposition.

To expand the grove later, the women apparently enlisted the help of Nelson Crist, Piedmont Park superintendent. Between 1910 and the mid-twenties, Crist maintained a tree nursery in the park from which he selected a White Ash to grow beside the 1895 stone terrace now dedicated to Sidney Lanier. Crist was probably responsible as well for the impressive Pin Oak accenting new park structures. Those structures were a 1910 rest house built in front of the lake at the 12th Street entrance to the park (now the Visitor Center), then a 1911 bath house built at the site of today's Greystone. When Crist finished a road connecting the two buildings in 1912, he probably added the Pin Oak to shade the entrance to the bath house, later rebuilt in grey stone in 1926.

Woods and Groves



Pecan *Carya illinoensis*

Grey-brown scaly bark, 11-17 leaflets on 16 in. leaf stalk, 70 ft. tall, oblong edible fruit



White Ash *Fraxinus americana*

Gray bark, diamond-shaped furrows, 7-9 leaflets on 12 in. leaf stalk, 80 ft. tall, rounded crown



Pin Oak *Quercus palustris*

Dark grey, broad fissured bark, small 5 in. leaves, soft-looking foliage, 80 ft. tall, horizontal branches

Woman's Grove



your left and go to the circular wall

Mayors Grove, 1925

The clubwomen's tree campaign continued when the Atlanta Women's Club started a tradition of planting a dogwood in this grove in honor of each new Atlanta mayor. The Dogwood Festival--the park's oldest annual celebration--highlights the moment each spring when nearly a fourth of the park's trees sport clouds of white blossoms. A number of these trees grow within the circular wall in front of you.

Dogwoods are an important understory tree in the mixed deciduous forest that once covered this part of Atlanta, but they were long ago cultivated for their flowers. Before the leaves appear in spring, a four-part, white leaf bract opens with a yellow center, making a 2-4 inch wide "flower."

Stop 5 Directions

Walk from the Mayors Monument to the street islands to the right of the Visitors Center at the head of the lake:

- Turn right on the sidewalk toward the street.
- Walk on the street with the lake on your left.
- At the islands by the Visitor Center, you come to a Y intersection of two park roads.
- As you turn right and uphill at this Y, you begin Elm Alley. The alley of trees is on your right as you head up to the playing fields. The drooping tree at the Y junction is the first elm on Elm Alley (also known as the Oval Road).

*The leaves of the Pecan and Ash look alike.
How can you tell the trees apart?*

Stop 4 Directions

Walk from the sidewalk to the Mayors Monument near the Mayors Playground:

- Walk straight toward Greystone.
- Walk right of Greystone on the middle sidewalk toward the playground.
- Follow the sidewalk with the playground on

Woods and Groves

Elm Alley, 1913-2006

Atlanta club women planted fifty European Littleleaf Lindens along the road above the Active Oval after it was built in 1913. The well-travelled women probably remembered Lindens from European tree avenues or alleys, but the foreign Lindens did not tolerate Atlanta's warm climate well, so all but seven of the trees died.

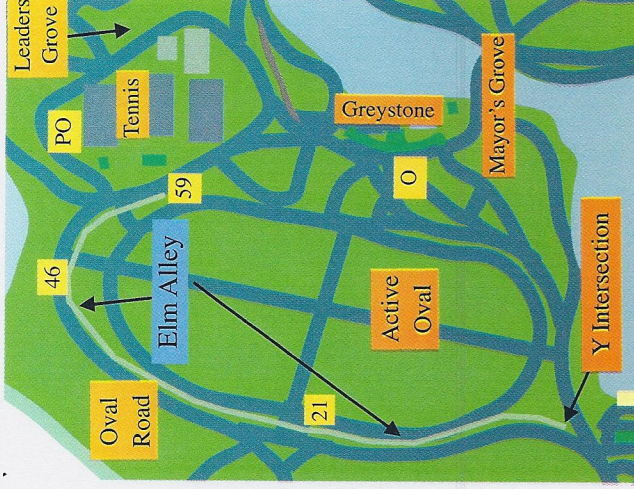
Nelson Crist later supplemented the club Lindens with elms, a favorite roadside tree in America. But Dutch Elm disease gradually wiped out all but two of his trees.

The Atlanta Parks Department filled in the gaps with some trees, but the biggest addition came in 2006 when the Piedmont Park Conservancy once again followed American tradition and lined the Oval with thirty-five Princeton elms, a new variety of elm resistant to the disease that killed Crist's trees.

You can enjoy this Elm alley as you walk back to where you started your tour. The elms, lindens, and a few other species are on the right side or Oval side of the road (see map on right). The trees along Elm Alley--some a century old, some young, and most quite young--show how a park grove can change while still retaining its integrity.

Count the 59 trees as you walk from the Winged Elm at the Y intersection around the Oval to the Tennis Center. There are no numbers on the trees, but the yellow numbers on the map above indicate the tree count at two path junctions on the alley and at the end of the alley.

If you count, you will find the Winged Elms



that Crist planted (numbers 1, 58). You will also see some erratics: an American Fringe tree (#5); a Red Maple (#9, look for 10 more of these); a Hackberry (#12); a Tulip Poplar (#22, look for 3 more); a Bradford Pear (#50); and a Zelkova or Japanese Elm (#55). But, most of all, count in order to find the Littleleaf Lindens that the club women first put in the ground to start the park's alley in 1913 (#32, 37, 38, 40, 42, 44, and 47).

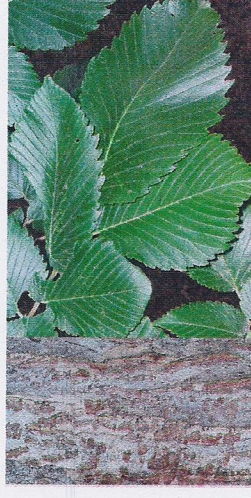
Stop 6 Directions for Walking along Elm Alley to Leaders Grove:

- From the Y intersection walk north with the restrooms and playscape on your left.



Winged Elm *Ulmus alata*

Small toothed leaves, branchlets with corky growths or wings, 40 ft. tree, vase-like shape, long limbs



Princeton Elm *Ulmus americana 'princeton'*

Grey fissured bark, 4 in. leaves, uneven leaf base, coarse-toothed, pointed, vase-shaped tree form



Littleleaf Linden *Tilia cordata*

Dark grey, rough bark, 2.5 in. heart-shaped leaves, dark above, light below, oval, drooping crown

Woods and Groves

- Continue around the curving road under the Botanical Garden and turn left by the courts.
- Circle the tennis courts on the north side. When you reach two sets of steps to the courts on your right, turn left on a short sidewalk into an oval walk with an arbor at one end. (See map below)

Leaders Grove, 2010

Groves remain a tradition in Piedmont Park. Recently, the Conservancy chose diverse trees, rather than a single traditional tree like the elm, to honor park leaders in a new grove.

Varied tree species--canopy oaks and maples with understory redbuds-- adorn the grove. The diverse trees provide varied highlights--the red

and orange fall color of the oaks and maples mixed with the pink spring color of the redbuds. This diversity, which is similar to what we saw in the native Wetland Woods earlier, adds beauty while at the same time protecting the grove from a disease or weather change that might wipe out the entire grove.

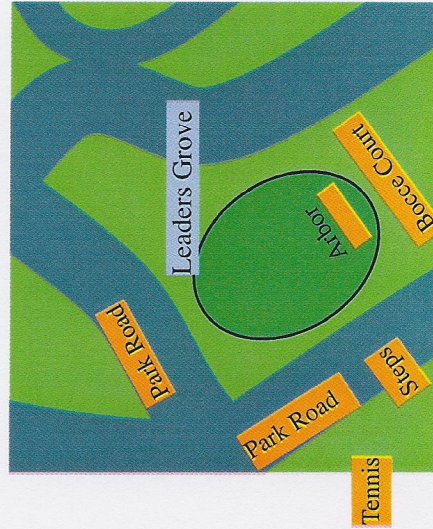
When the Conservancy replaced dying trees with 400 new trees in the south part of the park and added 683 young trees to the north part of the park in the last twelve years, they went with diversity for the most part. But there were also a few places where they emphasized one tree species in the tradition of Elm Alley.

Where are the Sugar Maples in the Leaders Grove?

End of Tour Directions

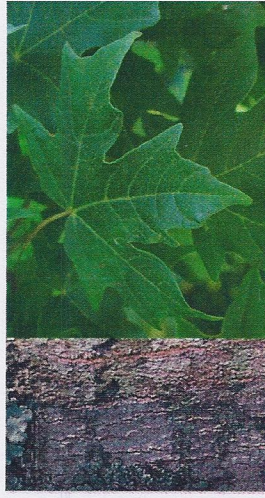
Walk from the Leaders Grove to your vehicle in the Parking Deck:

- Walk north toward Magnolia Hall, the gray building on your left.
- Turn right on the asphalt path with Magnolia Hall on your left and the Wetland Woods on your right.
- Walk beyond the building and take the steps or ramp to your left to the deck.



Nuttall Oak *Quercus texana*

Smooth trunk, small leaves, bright red in fall, straight trunk, 80 feet tall, pyramidal shape



Sugar Maple *Acer saccharum*

5-lobed leaf, brilliant, varied fall colors, helicopter fruit, 80 ft tall, spreading limbs, rounded crown



Eastern Redbud *Cercis canadensis*

Short trunk, large heart-shaped leaves, bright pink spring flowers, 30 ft. tall, large bean like fruit

Woods and Groves

Other Woods and Groves in Piedmont Park

Northwoods (NW on park map page)

Native woods similar to the Wetland Woods with a few trees that may date to the Civil War.

Walker Woods (WW)

Native woods by Clear Creek where the Walkers had a grist mill and Confederate soldiers camped in July 1864.

Authors Grove (AG)

A 1920s grove with individual trees planted in honor of authors, including a magnificent Deodar Cedar that looks like a giant Christmas tree just north of today's Noguchi Playscape.

Hoo-Hoo Grove (HH)

Small grove of Dogwoods near Park Drive Bridge that a lumbermen's club planted in 1921.

D.A.R. Grove (DAR)

Once stately grove, east of lake and north of the lake bridge, that the Daughters of the American Revolution created around 1920.

Circle of Trees (CT)

An inner circle of Pears and outer circle of Sugar Maples and Ginkgos at the west end of Oak Hill that sculptor Maren Hassinger designed for the Atlanta Arts Festival in 1985.

Answers

p. 2 A Tulip Poplar leaf is shaped like a tulip bloom. The White Oak by the Tennis Center is at least 120 years old and probably closer to 130.

p. 4 Pecans have more leaflets on each leaf stalk (10 or more versus 7 to 9 on the Ash). White

Ashes have a grey bark with diamond-shaped furrows while Pecans have straight-furrowed bark.

p. 6 Sugar Maples are on each side of the arbor. Two Trident Maples are on the outside top of the oval.

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Thanks to the volunteers who tested the tour.

To learn more about this tour or to volunteer, contact: volunteer@piedmontpark.org