***The Interpretive Trail is a 0.4-mile loop trail designed for the foot traveler to enjoy a leisurely walk through the woods while learning about the flora found in the park.***

1. **Eastern White Pine,** *Pinus strobus*, the

largest northeastern conifer, adds one whorl of 5 branches each year. Needles are 5 in a bundle, 2.5-5” long. Cones are 4-8” long and 1.5” wide. It was used extensively for ship masts in America’s early history.

2. **Plant Boxes** hold native plants that are either edible or medicinal. Names and uses are on the labels.

3. Behind the second plant box is an **American Beech,** *Fagus grandifolia*, a large tree with light gray, smooth, thin bark. It produces edible beechnuts. The leaves commonly remain on the tree in winter. Its shiny brown buds are up to 1” long and are slender and sharp pointed.

4. **Northern Red Oak,** *Quercus rubra*, is 60-90’ tall, with lobed leaves 4-9” long. Acorn caps are saucer shaped with tight scales. The bark is dark gray or blackish, rough and furrowed into scaly ridges. The upper trunk has bark with wide plates.

5. **Black Gum,** *Nyssa sylvatica*, has alternate, 2-5” oval leaves that turn vivid red in autumn. The bark is grayish, thick and fissured into quadrangular blocks (alligator bark) on very old trunks. The fruit is a dark blue berry called a drupe that ripens in autumn.

6. **Red Maple,** *Acer rubrum*, is 60-90’ tall with red flowers, fruit and autumn foliage. Leaves are opposite, 2-1/2 - 4” long with shallow short-pointed lobes. The bark of young trunks is smooth and light gray. Bark on older trees is darker and broken up into narrow plates. Pioneers made ink and cinnamon-brown and black dyes from a bark extract.

Around the red maple are **Pawpaw,** *Asimina triloba*, trees that can grow to 30’. Pawpaw leaves are 7-10” long, broadest beyond the middle. The unusual flowers have 3 triangular purple or brown outer petals. The edible fruit is a 3-5” slightly curved cylinder, tasting like custard.

7. **Forest Bathing** – The term first saw use in Japan in the 1980’s. Time spent in nature is good for us physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Take a few moments to breathe slowly and deeply and let the forest relax you. Walk slowly and thoughtfully, being mindful of where you are.

8. **Diabase Rocks:** Please read sign for information.

9. **Tree Finder**: six trees are identified here…

**(1) White Oak**, *Quercus alba*, has alternate, 6-9” leaves with 6-10 lobes and can reach 100’ in height. The acorns, whose bowl-like caps with a knobby surface enclose 1/4 of the 1” long nut, are important food for wildlife. The bark is very light gray in color and scaly. The wood is used for hardwood flooring, whiskey barrels and boat building. The white oak has leaves with round lobes, and the acorns ripen in one season.

**(2) Pignut Hickory,** *Carya glabra,* a large tree 1-2’ diameter and 60-80’ high, has compound leaves, finely saw-toothed, light green turning yellow in fall. The bark is light gray, smooth, becoming furrowed with forking ridges. The nut is thick-shelled and bitter. The wood is used for tool handles, skis, and formerly for wagon wheels. In colonial times, hogs consumed the nuts.

**(3) Tuliptree** *Liriodendron tulipifera*, has greenish-yellow, tulip-like flowers that bloom in May or June. This tree is in the magnolia family. A very tall tree, it grows rapidly and is an important timber and shade tree. The bark of the young trees is smooth, but it becomes deeply furrowed in a diamond pattern in older trunks. The furrows are much deeper than those of ash. This wood is used for veneer and crates.

**(4) Sassafras**, *Sassafras albidum*, is an aromatic tree reaching 30-60’ with three different shaped leaves. The bark is red-brown, thick and deeply furrowed; young branches are green. Roots and bark have been used for tea, root beer, and sassafras oil (used to perfume soap).

**(5) Slippery Elm,** *Ulmus rubra*, can grow to 70’ high and 2-3’ in diameter. Leaves are 4-7” long and 2-3” wide. The base of the leaf is round with uneven sides and doubly saw-toothed. The upper surface of the leaf is very rough with stiff hairs. The inner bark has been used as a cough medicine or as a poultice.

**(6) Sweet** or **Black Birch,** B*etula lenta*, is a tree that grows 50-80’ and has the odor of wintergreen when twigs and foliage are crushed. The bark is shiny and smooth with horizontal lines circling the trunk; the bark of older trunks is more irregular and platy. These trees can be tapped like sugar maples and the fermented sap made into birch beer.

 10. **Black Cherry,** *Prunus serotina,* (tree bending over trail) can grow 50-75’ high with alternate, narrow leaves 2-5” long, toothed and shiny dark green above. The bark of mature trees is dark, broken up into small, square, flaky plates. The wood is valued for quality furniture while many game birds, songbirds and mammals eat the fruits and seeds.

11. **American Hornbeam,** *Carpinus*

*caroliniana*, is a small shrubby tree growing only to 30’. The leaves are elliptical, doubly saw-toothed, and dark blue-green above. The wood is very tough and the smooth; the gray-brown trunk resembles muscles.

Look around you for standing dead and deteriorating trees called **snags.** These provide habitat for birds and other small animals. Snags are important in the forest community as they provide food and shelter.

12. **White Ash**, *Fraxinus americana*, has

opposite, compound 10” long leaves with 5-9

leaflets each. Its fruit is a winged seed called a samara, 2” x 1/4” and shaped like a canoe paddle. The bark is light gray and divided into deep, diamond-shaped fissures. Ash wood is used for sports equipment, handles and furniture. This ash has succumbed to the emerald ash borer.

13. A **Charcoal Flat is** an area about 30’ in

diameter where long ago wood was stacked by a collier and burned slowly to make charcoal for the Cornwall Iron Furnace. The collier who worked in this area was a slave known as **Governor Dick.** See display signs.

14. **Squaw root,** *Conopholis americana*, grows about 2-8” high in the woods especially under oak trees. It is parasitic on their roots. The plant blooms from May to July and the cluster of yellowish-brown flowers resembles a pinecone.

15. The **screech owl nesting box** is about 12’ high on a tulip poplar tree 100’ off the trail. The screech owls don’t actually screech except when agitated. Most of their calls are mellow whinnies and trills.

16. **Common Spicebush,** *Lindera benzoin*, is a spicy-scented shrub, very common in PA’s woods. Its yellowish flowers precede leaves in the spring and develop into an aromatic reddish berry called a drupe that can be dried and used for seasoning. The leaves and twigs may be steeped to produce a tea.

17. The **tree on the rock** actually split the rock with its roots as it grew. It began with lichen attaching itself to the rock. This gave moss spores a place to grow which in turn trapped soil particles and forest debris, creating a perfect place for a birch tree seed to germinate.

**Eagle Scout projects by**

**Jesse Lenton 2006**

**Michael Housel 2006**

**Elliott Clark 2009
Ryan Stammel 2011
Jacob Haldeman 2014
Dylan Gomer 2016**

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Sources:

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Common Trees of PA, DCNR;

Peterson Field Guides, Edible Wild Plants, 1977;

Wild Flowers and Weeds, Courtenay and Zimmerman, 1972;

Knowing Your Trees, the American Forestry

Association, 1978.

Interpretive

Trail

at

Governor

Dick

