***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 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 would be a great addition to your garden. These plants help our native bees and other insects to survive.

To the left of the first numbered plant box is a sugar maple tree, *Acer saccharum.* Maybe someday this tree will be tapped for its sap! Mmmmm! Maple syrup!

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, and produces bitter acorns every other year. The upper trunk has bark with smooth plates. We call those “ski tracks” and they are helpful for identification of this species. Its leaf buds are pointed, smooth, and brown.

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 and is consumed by many birds and animals.

6. These are **Pawpaw** trees**,** *Asimina triloba*, trees that can grow to 30’. Pawpaw leaves are big, 7-10” long, broadest beyond the middle. The unusual purplish-brown flowers have 6 triangular petals. The edible fruit is a 3-5” slightly curved cylinder, tasting like custard sometimes called “poor man’s banana.”

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. **Forest Regeneration** is the process of new tree seedlings becoming established in the forest. Regeneration is severely lacking in our forest because there are too many deer. Yes, they are beautiful mammals, but not when there are too many of them, we lose a lot of plants and young trees as the deer eat them.

10. If you turn around, you’ll see our sign with information on the **American chestnut,** *Castanea dentata*. Most of this species was wiped out from a fungal disease called chestnut blight in the early 1900s.

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 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.

Take a moment to relax on the bench and see, really see how big some of the trees are! The tallest are Tuliptrees, often called tulip poplar because the wood is lightweight just like poplar wood. This tree is in the magnolia family and has large yellow and orange flowers in the spring. One tree produces thousands of seeds, but the seeds have a low germination rate. Tuliptree leaves have a unique shape.

12. **White Ash**, *Fraxinus americana*, if living, would have opposite, compound 10-inch 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 was light gray and divided into deep, diamond-shaped fissures. Ash wood is used for sports equipment, handles and furniture. Most ash trees in PA have succumbed to the emerald ash borer such as the one that used to stand behind post 12.

13. The **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** and there are over 100 charcoal flats in the Park. Notice how the soil is still black even though no burning has gone on here for more than

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. **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.

16. The **tree on the rock** is splitting the rock with its roots as it grows. 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 and become this tree.

17. **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.

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**Eagle Scout projects by**

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Sources:

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Interpretive

Trail at

Governor

Dick

