Common Trees and Shrubs of the North Carolina Piedmont

Modifications provided by the Stevens Nature Center, Town of Cary, N.C.
Eastern Hemlock
(*Tsuga canadensis*)

Tree found in mountains or western Piedmont along streams and cool slopes; tree has a broad-based pyramid shape; short needles are round-tipped and \(\frac{1}{2} - 2/3\) in. long; Evergreen
Post Oak  
*Quercus stellata*

Tree of sandy, poor soils and rocky ridges; leaves resemble a cross when lower lobes are folded back and often turn brown in winter.

Black Oak  
*Quercus velutina*

Large tree of well-drained soils; leaves are variable in form, 6-10 in. long.

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Blackjack Oak
(*Quercus marilandica*)

Indicator of poor soils often on dry gravel or sandy uplands; leaves 4-8 in. long with three large indistinct lobes at the apex

Chestnut Oak
(*Quercus montana*)

Tree of sandy, rocky, dry uplands; leaves turn yellow to brown in fall, large acorns
**Scarlet Oak**  
*(Quercus coccinea)*  
Tree of poor or sandy soils, upland sites; leaves can turn brilliant red in fall in some years

**Southern Red Oak**  
*(Quercus falcata)*  
Tree of dry sites in uplands and mixed forests; leaves turn brown in fall; sometimes referred to as Spanish Oak

**Southern Sugar Maple**  
*(Acer floridanum)*  
Tree of low woods or well-drained, neutral soils; leaves turn red, orange, or yellow in fall

Trees and Shrubs of Floodplains and Shady Situations
**Boxelder**  
(*Acer negundo*)

Tree of low woods and stream banks; leaves are pinnately compound and have 3-7 leaflets per leaf

**Painted Buckeye**  
(*Aesculus sylvatica*)

Shrub of rich soils in shady sites; leaves turn yellow or orange very early, often in late summer; Hummingbirds attracted to flowers

**Virginia Pine**  
(*Pinus virginiana*)

Tree of old fields and heavily eroded and dry soils; needles 1½ -3 in. long found in bunches of two, cones ½-2¾ in. long and reddish brown; dead limbs persist along trunk; evergreen

**White Oak**  
(*Quercus alba*)

Tree of uplands and well-drained lowlands; bark is flaky and white; lobed leaves turn red or brown in fall
Sourwood
*(Oxydendrum arboreum)*

Tree of well-drained floodplains and uplands; flowers produce a tasty honey; trunk of tree is oval and often crooked; leaves turn reddish early in fall or late summer.

Short-leaf Pine
*(Pinus echinata)*

Common tree of uplands; needles 3-5 in. long in bunches of two; Evergreen.

Pawpaw
*(Asimina triloba)*

Small tree of lowlands; leaves turn yellow in the fall; wildlife attracted to fruits.

River Birch
*(Betula nigra)*

Tree of moist soils on stream banks, lakes, swamps, and flood plains; leaves turn dull yellow in fall.
Ironwood  
(Carpinus caroliniana)

Tree of moist soils of lowlands, often along streams; leaves turn dull yellow in fall; has smooth bark, trunk resembles muscle striations

Bitternut Hickory  
(Carya cordiformis)

Tree of moist, rich soils; leaves are 6-10 in. long with seven to nine narrow oval leaflets, leaves turn yellow in fall

Persimmon  
(Diospyros virginiana)

Small tree found statewide; leaves are 4-6 in. long; fruits are eaten by a variety of wildlife including foxes, opossum, raccoon, birds, and deer

Eastern Red Cedar  
(Juniperus virginiana)

Common small tree; leaves are 1/16 in. long; fleshy fruit eaten by birds in winter; evergreen
Mockernut Hickory
(Carya alba)

Tree mainly of uplands, sometimes in lowlands; each leaf usually has seven leaflets, turn yellow in fall; nuts are food for deer and squirrels

Pignut Hickory
(Carya glabra)

Tree of uplands and well-drained lowlands; each leaf has five leaflets, turn yellow in fall; nuts provide great wildlife food

Shagbark Hickory
(Carya ovata)

Tree of rich soils; often along streams and moist hillsides; leaves are 8-14 in. long with five tapered oval leaflets, leaves turn yellow in fall

Hazelnut
(Corylus americana)

Tree of well drained lowlands; leaves are heart-shaped, turn dull yellow in fall; nuts are food for small mammals and deer
Green or Red Ash
(*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*)

Tree of lowlands; compound leaves are oppositely attached on twigs, turn yellow in fall

**Black Walnut**
(*Juglans nigra*)

Tree of rich lowlands, and moist fertile coves on lower slopes; leaves are 12-24 in. long, and pinnately compound with 15-23 finely toothed oval leaflets, turn yellow in fall

**Serviceberry**
(*Amelanchier arborea*)

Small tree or shrub of shady sites; leaves are 2-4 in. long, ovate, and toothed, turn yellow or orange in fall

Trees of Well-Drained Situations, Usually Uplands
Maple Leaf Viburnum  
(Viburnum acerifolium)  
Shrub of uplands or lowlands; leaves often turn bright pink in fall; dark fruit in late fall and winter are food for birds and mammals

Downy Arrowwood  
(Viburnum rafinesquianum)  
Shrub of uplands or lowlands; fruits provide food for birds in winter; leaves often turn bronze in fall

Spicebush  
(Lindera benzoin)  
Shrub of floodplains, lowlands, or circumneutral soils; fruits are excellent fall bird food; leaves turn yellow in fall

Umbrella Magnolia  
(Magnolia tripetala)  
Small tree of moist and fertile soils in hardwood forests; leaves are 10-16 in. long, turn yellowish in fall
American Sycamore
(*Platanus occidentalis*)

Large tree found mostly along streams or in lowlands; leaves are 4-7 in. long with three to four lobes divided by broad, shallow indentions

Eastern Cottonwood
(*Populus deltoides*)

Large tree along stream banks and in lowlands; leaves are 3-6 in. long, 4-5 in. wide, toothed

Sweetleaf
(*Symplocos tinctoria*)

Shrub or small tree of uplands and lowlands, often in shady situations; purple leaf color in late fall persists into winter

Winged Elm
(*Ulmus alata*)

Takes name from the corky “wings” sometimes present on twigs; found on dry uplands and on moist soils; leaves are 1½-3½ in. long, oblong-oval, pointed, and toothed
**Sassafras**  
(*Sassafras albidum*)

Small tree or shrub usually in open areas or along edges; leaves are 4-6 in. long, may be two or three-lobed or not lobed at all, turn yellow-orange in fall.

**Big Leaf Snowbell**  
(*Styrax grandifolia*)

Small tree or shrub of moist soils, valleys, and uplands; flowers are white and bell-shaped in spring, leaves turn yellow in fall; bark is dark gray and smooth.

**Swamp Chestnut Oak**  
(*Quercus michauxii*)

Large tree of floodplains and lowlands; leaves similar to Chestnut Oak (*Q. montana*) which is a tree of uplands.

**Black Willow**  
(*Salix nigra*)

Medium-sized tree along streams or other wet areas where there is a continuous supply of water; leaves are 3-6 in. long and narrow, toothed.
**Bladdernut**  
(*Staphylea trifolia*)  
Shrub or small tree of lowlands and floodplains; has trifoliate leaves, turn yellow in the fall; bladder-like fruits

**American Elm**  
(*Ulmus americana*)  
Tree of lowlands and moist soils; leaves are 4-6 in. long, toothed; wood is hard and tough to split

**Red Oak**  
(*Quercus rubra*)  
Tree of moist and loamy soils that are well drained; leaves turn dark red to brown in fall; bark displays vertical lines

**Wild Azalea**  
(*Rhododendron periclymenoides*)  
Shrub of uplands and lowlands, often in shady situations; Hummingbirds attracted to pink flowers in spring
**Water Oak**  
*Quercus nigra*

Tree of moist soils mainly of lowlands or uplands; leaves turn yellow to brown in fall; a fairly short-lived oak

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**Willow Oak**  
*Quercus phellos*

Tree of mainly lowlands or uplands; leaves turn yellow to brown in fall; very small acorns, serve as valuable food for several birds, small mammals, and deer

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**Red Maple**  
*Acer rubrum*

Tree of moist soils of stream banks, valleys, swamps, and also uplands; leaves turn red to yellow in fall

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**Trees and Shrubs of Both Uplands and Lowlands**
**Redbud**  
(_Cercis canadensis_)  
Small tree of borders, hillsides and valleys primarily in the Piedmont; leaves are 3-5 in. long and heart-shaped; leaves usually turn yellow in fall

**Flowering Dogwood**  
(_Cornus florida_)  
Small tree of well-drained soils; leaves turn red or yellow in fall, red fruit in fall eaten by birds and other wildlife

**Loblolly Pine**  
(_Pinus taeda_)  
Tree of floodplains to well drained upland slopes, common in Piedmont; needles 6-10 in. long in bunches of three; Evergreen

**Black Cherry**  
(_Prunus serotina_)  
Medium-sized tree that grows nearly everywhere except excessively wet sites; leaves are 2-6 in. long, narrowly oval, pointed; birds readily eat fruits
Red Mulberry
(*Morus rubra*)

Often found on rich soils; leaves are 3-5 in. long, heart shaped or lobed, toothed, and pointed, turn yellowish in fall.

Blackgum
(*Nyssa sylvatica*)

Tree that grows in many conditions ranging from floodplains to dry uplands; leaves are 2-5 in. long; leaves often reddish early in fall or late summer.

American Beech
(*Fagus grandifolia*)

Tree of uplands and well-drained lowlands; leaves turn dull yellow to brown in fall; nuts serve as food for birds and other wildlife.

White Ash
(*Fraxinus americana*)

Tree of well-drained soils and even lowlands; leaves are 8-12 in. long, and compound with 5-9 oblong leaflets, leaves turn yellow in fall.
Witch Hazel
*(Hamamelis virginiana)*

Small tree of hardwood forest understory; leaves are broadly elliptical, uneven at leaf base, turn yellow in fall

American Holly
*(Ilex opaca)*

Tree of moist or well drained soils, floodplains or uplands; leaves are spiny, female trees bear red fruit in fall; Evergreen

Tulip Tree
*(Liriodendron tulipifera)*

Fast growing tree of moist but well-drained soils and uplands; leaves resemble a tulip in cross section, turn yellow in fall

Sweet Gum
*(Liquidambar styraciflua)*

Tree of moist soils or uplands; leaves are star shaped, turn yellow to purple in fall