Self-Guided Neighborhood Tree Tour

Created by Debra Kumar

Starting point: Lewis Creek Visitor Center

Summary/Theme: From Farm to Park. Lewis Creek is a beautiful, multi-use park located in South Bellevue.

Distance: Slightly over ½ mile

This tree tour was developed by one of Bellevue's Neighborhood Tree Ambassador volunteers. The goal of the Neighborhood Tree Ambassador program is to help build community support for trees in Bellevue.

Trees are an important part of our community because they provide significant health and environmental benefits. Trees:

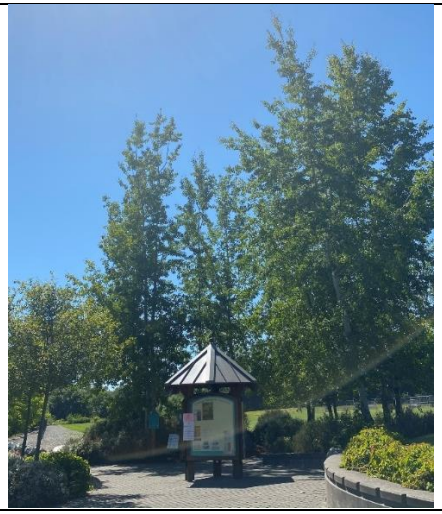
- Remove pollutants from the air and water
- Reduce stress and improve focus
- Lower air temperature
- Pull greenhouse gases from the atmosphere
- Reduce flooding and erosion caused by rain

Bellevue has a goal to achieve a 40% tree canopy across the entire city. As of 2017, we are at 37%. Around two-thirds of Bellevue's existing tree canopy is in residential areas. By preserving and planting trees in residential areas, Bellevue's community members can make a big difference in helping to reach the 40% tree canopy goal.

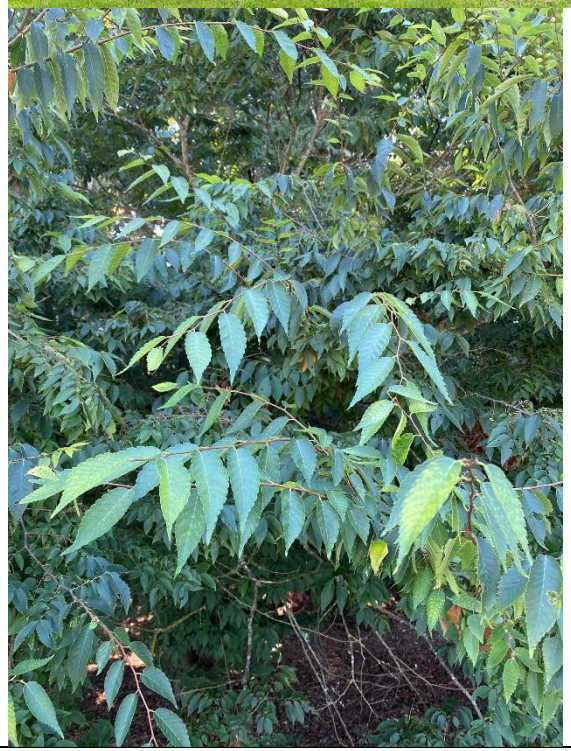
For more information about trees in Bellevue or the Neighborhood Tree Ambassador program, please visit BellevueWA.gov/trees.

If you have questions or would like to share feedback about this tour, please email trees@bellevuewa.gov.

Stop #	Landmark	Discussion	Photo
1	Visitor Center Katsura Tree	Lewis Creek was once a farm started by the Petola family. At the beginning of this tour, look around the park. What kinds of trees do you see? There are many trees, both deciduous and evergreen. Deciduous trees lose their leaves each year, typically late fall to early winter. Many deciduous trees have beautiful color in the fall, such as the Katura trees lining the circle drive opposite the visitor center. The Katsura Tree is one of only two species in the family Cercidiphyllaceae, both native to Japan and China, and thought to represent the last relics of an ancient group of trees. If you look around the park from where you stand you may notice evergreen trees such as Douglas Fir and Western Red Cedar. Evergreens do not lose their leave or needles and stay green year-round. There are several ways to identify trees. Form is a feature used to identify trees. Other features include bark, cones, fruit and leaves. Trees provide many benefits, and it's good to have a variety, also known as diversity, in an	

		ecosystem. Trees help filter the air of pollutants, returning oxygen in exchange. Trees cool our environment. They provide habitat for many animals, including shelter, sources of food, and nesting/nesting materials. Access to trees, greens spaces, and parks promote greater physical activity, reduce stress, and improve quality of life in cities and towns. Can you think of other benefits of trees? The city of Bellevue is actively engaged in increasing tree canopy within the city to 40% by 2050. Currently we are at 37%, which is not bad, but the canopy is not evenly distributed throughout the city, so there is work to be done to "green up" areas that have too little tree canopy.	
1	Quaking Aspen	Turn to face west and notice the trees on the perimeter of the ballfields. These are Quaking Aspen. When the wind blows, you can hear the leaves rattle and see them fluttering. Groves of Quaking Aspen can all be parts of a single plant, with each stem connected to a common root system. These single organisms can cover many acres, and one in Utah is estimated to be 80,000 years old, possibly the oldest living thing on earth!	

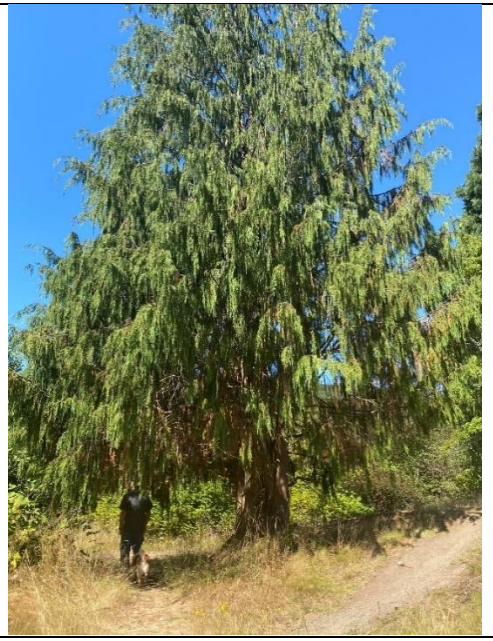
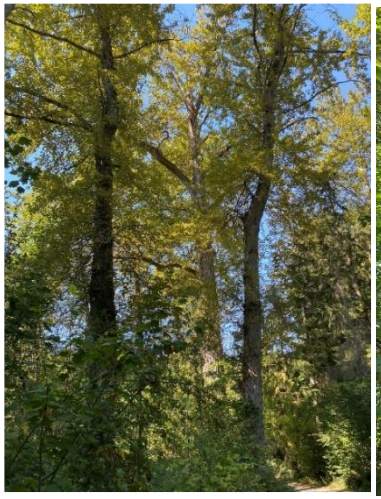
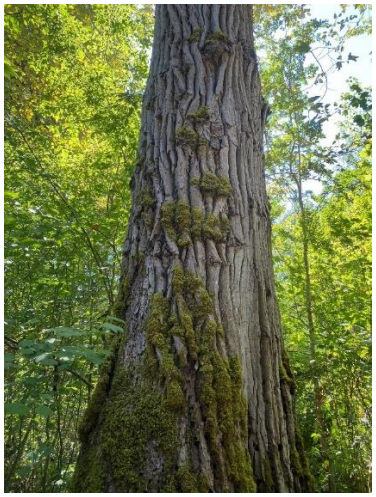
2	Lombardy Poplar	Continue on the path around the ballfields. As you head west, notice the very tall and somewhat slender trees ahead at the edge of the park? These are Lombardy Poplar and are commonly planted as an ornamental tree or as a windbreak. These Lombardy Poplars were likely planted when the park was a farm, used as a wind break, and perhaps a property line indicator. As you move through the park, look for more Lombardy Poplars.	

3	Japanese Zelkova Serrata	To the right of the Lombardy Poplar, nestled back toward the north corner of the park, is a beautiful medium size tree with slender, drooping twigs, forming a neat spreading crown. This is a Japanese Zelkova Serrata, also known as Oriental Elm, Common Zelkova, or Keaki. This is a lovely tree located along the entrances from Lakemont to the park. In the spring, the new growth looks stunning and in the fall the leaves turn a beautiful yellow to orange to rusty. It's a fun tree to watch throughout the season! As you move through the park, see if you can spot the others!	 

4	Tulip Tree	Continue along the path around the ballfields. As you make your way down the hill toward the wetland loop, notice the trees to your left along the ballfield perimeter. These are Tulip Trees. They are deciduous, and leaves flutter in the breeze similar to quaking aspen. The leaf shape is unique in that it is 4-lobed, the outline of which looks much like a tulip. This tree produces a tulip shaped flower that are green and yellow. Make your way to the boardwalk of the wetland loop!	 

5	Wetland Cattails	This wetland serves as the headwaters to Lewis Creek, flowing into Lake Sammamish. It is an important feature of the park, filtering pollutants such as phosphates and nitrates from the hillside above, and is home to many animals, including birds, frogs, ducks, and garter snakes. The Cattails are perennial, and are found near lakes, ponds, rivers and marshes. They have long, flat leaves and long cylindrical brown flower spikes. They help clean the water flowing through them by trapping excess nutrients. Underwater, they provide a safe haven for tiny fish and insects and attract many small aquatic creatures that birds and other wildlife feed on. They create a shelter from winter cold and wind for mammals and birds and are a source of nesting materials with their leaves and seeds.	  

5	Hamburger Rock	Continue along the path, passing Hamburger Rock on your left. Be sure to stop and read the interpretive sign which describes the natural history of this unusual rock.	
6	Giant Sequoia And Western Red Cedar	This Giant Sequoia is native to California and can grow up to 250 feet! The Western Red Cedar next to the Sequoia is native to the Pacific Northwest and can grow to over 100 feet. Both are evergreens, produce cones, and have reddish brown bark, but these two trees are a study in contrast. As a native of California, the Giant Sequoia is drought tolerant, whereas Western Red Cedar, being native to the Pacific Northwest, is comfortable growing in moist conditions, so is unfortunately not drought tolerant. What is being noted around Bellevue is a dying off of some Western Red Cedars due to extended drought conditions. The city is now	

		actively planting more Giant Sequoia, as well as other drought tolerant trees, to help offset the loss of Western Red Cedar, while continuing to build up tree canopy. Opposite these two giant trees you can see evidence of the Petola farm, including remnants of their orchard. Be sure to take a look at the interpretive sign describing the farm history. Notice the Lombardy Poplars? Continue straight along the path, passing through the trail intersection.	
7	Black Cottonwood	These giant trees stand out throughout the park and are notable for their deeply furrowed bark, as well as the cotton fluff that is released each spring. Many people who suffer from allergies think it is the cotton fluff creating the allergies, but in fact it is the pollen that is released from male trees 3 weeks before the fluff is released! Black Cottonwood is native to the Pacific Northwest and is the fastest growing native tree in North America. The bark, which can be quite beautiful, is covered with lenticels that become thick and deeply fissured on old trees. In fact, the bark can become so hard that it is enough to cause sparks when cut with a chainsaw! Black Cottonwood grows in moist	 

		conditions. How many Black Cottonwoods do you see in this area at the edge of the wetland?	
7	Grassland field	Continue straight along the path and make your way around the grassland field back to the Visitor Center. The open field is lovely to look at but it is considered a monoculture environment which means it has little to no diversity. In a monoculture environment over time, nutrients can be depleted from the soil, leaving the soil weak and unable to support healthy plant growth, except perhaps invasive Himalayan Blackberry, which you can see plenty of on the perimeter of the field! This concludes our tour, but don't stop here! There is still a lot to see in this park so be sure to come back another time and explore Lewis Creek Park further. Come to see the changing colors of the deciduous trees, explore the abundant trails throughout the park, and enjoy the overall beauty that is Lewis Creek.