

# Common Trees of Long Hunter State Park



Long Hunter State Park's vicinity to water and its location in the Central Basin result in a variety of habitats: woods, shoreline, rocky karst topography, grassy barrens, swampy areas, and rare cedar glades. This also results in a variety of tree species. This brochure will discuss common trees found at Long Hunter along with some of the more unusual species.

Long Hunter is home to many different oak and hickory species. In the red oak family, **Northern Red Oak**, **Shumard Oak** and **Black Oak** have similar bark and leaves and can be difficult to tell apart. The acorns can usually separate them, however, and they often occur in different habitats. **Shingle Oak** stands apart from most red oaks in that its leaves lack deeply cut lobes. All four of these red oaks can be found along the Couchville Lake Trail.

Perhaps the most common white oak at Long Hunter is **Chinkapin Oak**. Their light gray scaly bark and narrow, coarsely toothed leaves separate it from other oaks. They prefer alkaline soils on limestone outcrops and are often found on the edges of the cedar glades. They're also notable for their sweet acorns. Other white oaks found here include **Post Oak** (leathery, cross-

shaped leaves) and **White Oak** (often large with burgundy fall color).

The most common hickory species here is **Southern Shagbark Hickory**. Mature trees are recognized by the shaggy bark, which separates into strips that curl away from the trunk. The tree's thick-shelled nuts are edible and were a staple food for Native Americans. Butterflies, lizards and bats often roost under the loose bark. Other hickory species at Long Hunter include **Pignut**, **Mockernut**, **Bitternut**, **Red**, **Shellbark**, and **Northern Shagbark**.

At least four maple species are found here: Sugar, Red, Silver, and Boxelder. **Sugar Maple** is prevalent along the woodland trails. The boiled sap of this tree is the commercial source of maple sugar and syrup. Look for drill marks around some specimens; this is the work of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a woodpecker which eats the sap along with the insects attracted to the sap.

**Silver Maple** and **Boxelder** are often found near water. Silver Maple has deeply cut leaves that are silvery beneath. **Red Maple** is known for its red stems, buds and fall foliage.

Ash is common at the park, although the Emerald Ash Borer has resulted in the loss of many trees. **White Ash** is found in the rich woods and has compound leaves and strong wood that is used for baseball bats, tennis racquets, hockey sticks, and other sports equipment.

**Green Ash** is typically found beside water, while **Blue Ash** prefers the rocky cedar glades. Blue Ash has twigs and stems that are often square, which distinguishes it from other ashes. The "blue" is a reference to the blue dye produced when the inner bark is placed in water and when the sap is exposed to air.

**Winged Elm** is one of the more common trees in the limestone barrens and glades of Long Hunter. These small, hardy trees are recognized by the

broad, thick pair of corky wings that form along the branchlets.

**American Elm** is present, but it isn't as common as it once was due to Dutch Elm disease. **Slippery Elm** has a thick, glue-like inner bark which has a variety of medicinal uses. The rare **September Elm** is the only elm that produces fruit during the fall months.

**Hackberry** is abundant and is known for the corky, wart-like projections that cover the bark. It produces small purplish berries that are consumed by birds.



Honey Locust

The only native evergreen found at the park is **Eastern Red Cedar**. Its wood is used for log cabins and fence posts, and the aromatic heartwood is avoided by moths and thus used for clothes chests and closets. The pale blue fruits, which are actually a type of cone, occur on female trees and are eaten by birds.

Three species often seen near water are **American Sycamore**, **Eastern Cottonwood** and **Black Willow**. Sycamore has brown and white mottled bark, which can become totally white on the upper trunk. These are often huge trees and were used by Native Americans to make dugout canoes. Hollow trunks of old, giant sycamores even sheltered early settlers.

Cottonwoods are tall with gray, corky bark and leaves that are large, papery and triangular. Their wind-blown, cottony seeds can be found drifting along the Couchville Lake Trail during spring.

Black Willow prefers wet soil and is often found growing at odd angles beside the water. A natural glucoside called salicin, which is the active compound in aspirin, was discovered from Black Willow.

**Honey Locust** is recognized by long, needle-sharp thorns on its trunk. Historically, hard thorns of younger trees were used as nails. The tree has a long flat seed pod which contains a sticky, honey-like edible pulp called locust bean gum.

**Black Locust** tends to have thorns on its branchlets rather than its trunk. It produces cream-colored flowers in late spring, and these strongly scented blooms attract many bees. Look for a couple of these trees along the Deer Trail.

Some of the best (and earliest) fall color at the park can be found from **Sassafras** and **Black Gum**. Sassafras is known for the root beer-like aroma of its roots. A tea can be made from the inner bark and roots. Their leaves come in three shapes: a mitten, a “ghost,” and a football. In autumn the leaves turn brilliant shades of yellow, orange and red. Black Gum, also known as Black Tupelo and Sour Gum, produces small, greenish-white flowers and bluish-black fruit. Historically, pioneers used the fibrous woody tissue of its broken twigs as a toothbrush substitute. It’s known for its splendid fall foliage, which ranges from yellow, orange, red, scarlet, and purple.

Two of the most popular spring trees in the park are **Eastern Redbud** and **Flowering Dogwood**. Eastern Redbud has striking, bright pink flowers that emerge before its smooth, heart-shaped leaves. Flowering Dogwood blooms a bit later and has showy white bracts that are often mistaken for petals; its true flowers are actually crowded together in yellowish-green clusters above the four bracts. Lesser known is

**Roughleaf Dogwood**, a small tree with hairy, rough upper leaves and white fruit. These short-lived trees often form thickets.

One species that thrives in a variety of habitats around Long Hunter is **Common Persimmon**. It has blackish bark broken into small blocks – similar to an alligator’s back. Its fruit is sour and astringent when green, but edible and sweet when it turns orange in the fall. Its fruit can be made into cakes, puddings and beverages.

Another tree which produces a sweet edible fruit is **Red Mulberry**. Its reddish-purple fruit ripens in May and is used in jellies and pies. These are often found in moist areas and have large ovate leaves which turn bright yellow in fall.



Three different plum species have been identified at Long Hunter: **American Plum**, **Mexican Plum**, and **Chickasaw Plum**. All produce edible fruits.

**Black Cherry** is the largest native cherry in the U.S. and can be found scattered around the park. Look for dark bark which has a scaly or flaky pattern – almost like “burnt corn flakes” attached to the trunk. The small fruits are rather bitter and best used for jams, jellies and wine.

Look for a few scattered **Pawpaw** patches in the rich woods. These small trees with large leaves produce American’s largest native edible fruit,

which when ripe tastes similar to a mango or banana.

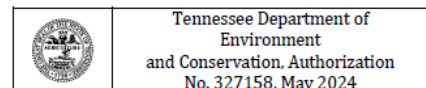
Long Hunter is home to two smallish trees known for their strong wood. The forest understory features many **Eastern Hophornbeam** trees. Often nicknamed Ironwood, it’s used for tool handles, levers, mallets, and fence posts. It can often be identified by its bark, which has small, thin, shaggy plates flaking off. Its common name refers to the resemblance of its fruit clusters to hops, an ingredient of beer. **American Hornbeam**, aka Musclewood, is found mostly along stream banks. It has smooth, gray bark which looks like muscles or tendons.

The Deer Trail has a population of **Sweet Gum**, which has star-shaped leaves and a fruit which looks like a spiky ball. It’s named for the inner bark which was once used as chewing gum.

Long Hunter features several small, lesser known understory trees worth noting. **Rusty Blackhaw** has blocky bark, finely toothed leaves, creamy white flowers, and blue-black fruits which ripen in autumn. **Carolina Buckthorn** has elliptical, dark green glossy leaves with a small round fruit that turns from bright red to black and is a popular food for birds. **Buckthorn Bumelia** is twisted and irregular in appearance and features small, bell-shaped white flowers in summer followed by maroon berries in fall. **Common Hoptree**, with its showy flat round fruits, is a host plant for the Giant Swallowtail butterfly

**Tulip Poplar** is the state tree of Tennessee. Though not common around Long Hunter, a few specimens can be seen along the Deer Trail. It’s typically a tall, straight tree with tulip-like flowers. Its unusual winter buds resemble a duck’s bill.

*Brochure created by Jason Allen*



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