This walk and booklet were prepared with the help, advice and encouragement of Ray Cobb, Ian Cooke, Chris Sanders and Claire Wells.

For further information on the trees, one of the best modern books is the Collins 'Tree Guide', by Owen Johnson and David More.



The University of Nottingham welcomes members of the local community to enjoy University Park. For events and publications based on University Park, check out our website at www.nottingham.ac.uk/estate/friends

GUIDES IN THIS SERIES:



- > Rock around the Campus A geological walk through University Park
- > The Historic Houses of University Park
- > Conifers on Campus A Winter Tree Walk in University Park
- > University Park Gardens Guide and Tree Walk
- ➤ Welcome to University Park mini guide



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Conifers on Campus A winter tree walk in University Park



A winter tree walk in University Park

Winter is the season when conifers are especially prominent in the landscape and so it is a good time to consider their manifold virtues. For a start, they provide most of our construction timbers, as well as pulpwood for making paper and cardboard. Such commercially important species are also often planted in parks and gardens, along with many others introduced purely for their amenity and ornamental values. The conifers, literally cone-bearers, evolved long before flowering plants and once covered the world's land-masses. At present they are particularly well represented in temperate regions of the northern hemisphere. Many of those that grow best in Britain originate from the forests of western North America and were brought to us by some of the great plant hunters of the 19th century.

This walk offers an opportunity to appreciate just a small selection of the tree treasures to be found around University Park. Much credit is due to the foresight of our tree-planting predecessors for the rich diversity we can enjoy here today.

Compiled by Graham Piearce



▲ Araucaria araucana (above) and Pinus wallichiana with Nathaniel Wulff Wallich (below)



• The walk starts at the Main Visitor Car Park. Immediately notable in this area are two of the commonest conifers in suburban Britain. An impressive row of the vigorous hybrid known as Leyland Cypress (*x Cupressocyparis leylandii*) fringes the car park. Our first False Cypress (Chamaecyparis spp.) is a variety of Lawson Cypress (C. lawsoniana), a multistemmed plant to the right of the steps as we go up to Hugh Stewart Hall.

In the quad to the right is the distinctive Monkey Puzzle (Araucaria araucana), the only conifer we shall see from the southern hemisphere. Next to it is a Blue or Western Himalayan Pine (Pinus wallichiana). To the left we proceed between paired columns of another Lawson Cypress (C. lawsoniana 'Stewartii'), one of the more frequent golden cultivars, which fades to a uniform green in winter. Out into the Hugh Stewart Hall garden, in a steep dip to the left is a Coast Redwood (Sequoia sempervirens). One of these trees in its native California currently holds the record for the world's tallest living tree, measuring 115 metres (378 feet). An additional point of winter interest is the leafless tree behind, with weirdly twisted branches, aptly named the Corkscrew Willow (Salix babylonica var. pekinensis 'Tortuosa'). And to its right is a Holm Oak (Quercus ilex), an evergreen tree from southern Europe, perhaps first introduced to Britain not far from here, when Wollaton Hall was built in the 16th century.

▲ The bank ahead contains much of interest, but first we notice two trees on the right, a cedar and a larch. These are the only types of conifer that have their needle-like leaves arranged in rosettes on older shoots. The Blue Atlas Cedar (Cedrus atlantica Glauca Group), from the Atlas Mountains of North Africa, is common in large gardens. The Japanese Larch (Larix kaempferi) is more often seen in timber plantations. Although it is deciduous, it is easily identified by its persistent cones.



Sequoia sempervirens (below), Sequoyah [George Gist] (inset below) and Engelbert Kaempfer (above)





Just behind the Atlas Cedar is a Serbian Spruce (Picea omorika), a variable ornamental. A Blue Pine can be seen at close guarters to the right of the pathway, with its pendent, needles in bundles of five. Behind that, on the boundary, is a Western Hemlock (Tsuga heterophylla), a forestry species recognised partly by its mixture of short and long leaves. Further along, to the left there is a Sawara Cypress (Chamaecyparis pisifera), from Japan, which has peasized cones. The three tallest trees here are all Colorado Spruce (Picea pungens). Throughout this area there are examples of our native Common Yew (Taxus baccata), both the redberried female and pollen-bearing male plants, as well as some Golden Yew, T. baccata Aurea Group.



▲ Chamaecyparis pisifera (above), Tsuga heterophylla (below)



▲ The rich winter greens of conifers near the Hallward Library

6 Leaving Hugh Stewart Hall we proceed northwards along Library Road. To the west we can glimpse a fine assortment of ornamental conifers planted between the Hallward Library and the Staff Club. The largest trees there are Deodar Cedar (Cedrus deodara), with drooping branch ends. Two smaller ones in the foreground are Hinoki Cypress (Chamaecyparis obtusa). At the corner with Lenton Hall Drive, on our right is a Western Red Cedar (Thuja plicata), well known for its durable timber, used to make garden sheds and greenhouses. Across the road ahead, bordering the Downs is a mixed shelterbelt of trees, starting with several Scots Pine (Pinus sylvestris) to the left, then many true cedars, including immature Deodars.

✓ Just after Cripps Hall Annex, towards the junction with Beeston Lane, we come to a splendid grove of young redwood trees. They are dominated by four Giant Sequoia or Wellingtonia (Sequoiadendron giganteum). One of these trees in California is the world's largest living organism, with a basal diameter of over 9 metres (30 feet) and reckoned to weigh at least 2,000 tons. Amongst them here are five Dawn Redwood (Metasequoia glyptostroboides), a remarkable living fossil of a tree, rediscovered in China only in the 1940s. It is deciduous, as is the Swamp Cypress (Taxodium distichum), a very similar American species, represented by a single tree that is a challenge to spot in this group.

 Crossing the road we move next to a small island of trees and shrubs at the back of Cripps Hall. The main understorey evergreens are our native Common Holly (*llex aquifolium*) as well as a variegated form, Golden Holly (I. aquifolium 'Aurea Marginata').



Sequoiadendron, Metasequoia & Taxodium



Picea sitchensis with spruce galls (left) and David Douglas (above)

The conifers here are all major commercial species. Partly hidden in the middle is a Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), the most abundantly grown plantation species in British forestry. At the Hall end are two towering specimens of another North American tree that grows exceptionally well in this country, the Grand Fir (*Abies grandis*). On the eastern edge is a line of four young pines with needles in pairs.

This is the important forestry tree called Corsican Pine (*Pinus nigra ssp. laricio*), which may be compared with a Scots Pine a little further back and to the right. Over on the north side of Cripps Hill, just above the rock garden, the screen of conifers includes four Leyland Cypress and a Lawson Cypress at each end. The plentiful cones of the two European Larch (Larix decidua) are more oval and the scales less reflexed than those of the Japanese Larch we saw earlier. Venturing behind these trees we can discover two, as yet only modest, examples of Douglas Fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii), a renowned timber tree. This is the species that holds the record for the tallest tree in Britain, reaching 64 metres (210 feet) so far, in Scotland. The forked conifer here, near the corner of the Energy Learning Unit, is a Serbian Spruce.



Christopher John Leyland (left) and Archibald Menzies (right)

• Several large pines occur beside the road to the School of the Built Environment and become common alongside Beeston Lane and at the Derby Road boundary. These are the Black Pine (Pinus nigra). The Corsican Pine is closely related but those chosen for landscape purposes are more often the easterly subspecies, Austrian Pine (P. nigra ssp. nigra). The small evergreen, near the corner with Beeston Lane, is a Holm Oak.



▲ Larix kaempferi



Larix decidua

9

 Making a beeline for Lenton and Wortley Hall, we enter the Amphitheatre Dry Garden. The nine Gum trees (Eucalyptus spp.) are all from temperate parts of southern Australia. This large and important genus includes the world's tallest and fastestgrowing broadleaved trees. Amongst them here can be found at the eastern end a Ponderosa or Western Yellow Pine (Pinus ponderosa), with long, stiff needles in bundles of three, and on either flank some more Corsican Pines. Out into the Lenton Hurst lawn area we have a chance to see again some good Blue Atlas and Deodar Cedars and Commo and Golden Yews. A selected form of the Blue Colorado Spruce (Picea pungens Glauca Group) makes an isolated feature.

Along the northern side is another evergreen oak from the Mediterranean, a sapling Cork Oak (Quercus suber). The western edge planting includes a trio of Scots Pine and a single, young Douglas Fir.



▲ A group of Pinus nigra trees dominating the winter skyline

Continuing westwards we turn right into Lenton Hurst. Taking care on the steps into and out of the Jekyll Garden, we may pause to note that the perennial beds in the centre are edged with clipped, dwarf varieties of Box (Buxus sempervirens), an evergreen tree native to south-eastern England. Several different coloured leaved versions are used in this historic garden. As we approach the building, there is on our left a young cedar with unusually short needles, possibly a rare Cedrus brevifolia. ▲ Mixed conifers, including Picea breweriana with the weeping foliage and William Henry Brewer (inset)

Just over the driveway, opposite Derby Hall, is an admirable collection of conifers. Once more we can compare adjacent Leyland (pic to right) and Lawson Cypresses. The handsome tree at the front is a Brewer's Weeping Spruce (Picea breweriana), a slowgrowing species well designed to minimise snow damage in its native North American mountain habitat. To its right is a Norway Spruce (Picea abies), familiar as a Christma tree but with a wide range of other special uses too, from classic violins to spruce beer.



▲ Cupressocyparis leylandii cones

(D) Behind and to the right of the Norway Spruce, passing around a Deodar Cedar, we reach a group of three Japanese Red Cedar (Cryptomeria japonica), with globular cones at the branch ends. This valuable forestry tree is the oriental counterpart of North America's Giant Sequoia, on a somewhat smaller scale. Behind them and further right, under more Black Pines at the perimeter, we can find one of its most popular cultivars, though looking very different as it has only juvenile leaves. This is the bushy C. japonica 'Elegans', which turns purplish in winter. Next to that is another garden favourite also with juvenile foliage, the Moss Cypress (Chamaecyparis pisifera 'Squarrosa'), again quite unlike its parent species, though this plant has some branches that have reverted and bear the typical Sawara Cypress scale leaves and cones.

Whatever route you take back to the car park, you will be sure to see even more conifers and other fascinating trees!

