

A Walk Around the Main Library



The UA's Main Library is a mini-arboretum in itself. Warren Jones planted many of his experimental species around this building, after its completion in 1977. Here's a brief "plant walk" around three sides of the Main Library that can be best viewed in the evenings in late April through June to enjoy many blooms. At that time of the day, most of the walk will be in shade.

START: at the NE corner of the Main Library (at the intersection of Cherry Ave and the Main Mall), proceed south on the eastern side of the building.

1. The small spreading trees with 6" gray leaves are Loquat - *Eriobotrya japonica*. This small tree in the Rosaceae family which produces edible fruit. (related to apples and roses). As it is native to the Far East, it needs afternoon shade and adequate water in Tucson's summer.



2. The trees with large glossy leaves and white flowers are Southern magnolia - ***Magnolia grandiflora***. It is native to the Southeastern US and needs afternoon shade in Tucson to do well. There are many examples of this species on campus including many large trees around the Arizona State Museum.



3. The trees with small gray leaves are Olive - ***Olea europaea***. This Mediterranean native produces an edible fruit and fine quality oil. The oldest olives on campus are in the historic district next to the Park Avenue Main Gate. It is a wonderful, long-lived, drought tolerant, shade tree for Tucson with few liabilities except for allergenicity for some individuals.



4. A new tree just planted near the sidewalk is Gingko - ***Ginkgo biloba***. Native to China. This is a very old species that has been able to survive through climate changes and human destruction. Related to pines and other cone bearing plants. Not a good choice for a hot spot, but OK with afternoon shade.



5. In the lawn area are many Southern Live Oaks - ***Quercus virginiana***. Native to the eastern part of US, this tree is also used as a landscape tree in Tucson, but rarely given the room required. Oaks cross hybridize freely, making identification of the species challenging.



6. Up against the walkway and extending to the sidewalk overpass that leads into the library courtyard, is a small garden with several tropical shrubs and small trees. The largest tree, toward the northern edge is ***Senna spectabilis excelsa*** (no common name) originally from Argentina. This tree, as a member of the bean family (Fabaceae) produces showers of bright yellow flowers in June and is related to mesquites and palo verdes.



7. Look east (left) across Cherry Avenue. The huge mesquite at the corner of the parking garage might be the broadest on campus. It is a ***Prosopis*** hybrid with apparently at least one South American parent. Notice the size to which mesquites are capable of spreading.



8. **Turn the corner to continue westward along 4th Street.** Just inside a small niche after the corner is a strange tree with glossy leaflets shaped like a cross. It is Calabash tree - ***Crescentia alata*** from southern Mexico, related to our desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*). When mature, this magnificent tree produces unusual brown-ish orange flowers which grow directly on the trunk. It was designated a Great Tree of Arizona but is currently recovering from a devastating freeze injury incurred in 2011. The tree was salvaged but will take many years to be restored to a healthy structure and stature.



9. Proceeding west, you will see a very full tree with dark green, glossy and large elliptical leaves wedged tightly into a small alcove in the building's south side. This is a Port Jackson Fig - ***Ficus rubiginosa***, a small tree native to Australia, but distributed throughout the south Pacific.



10. Continuing westward, you will see a tall tree next to the building and behind the wall. This is a Guaimuchil or *Pithecellobium dulce*, native to the Mexican tropics. Although it is tender here, it experiences less dieback in this protected microclimate than in other places in Tucson.



11. **Proceeding northward.** Turning north and walking along the main library's west face, you will see lacy-leaved trees with blue blossoms overhead. These are a special variety of *Jacrandia mimosifolia*, sent to Professor Warren Jones from high elevations in South America. These trees bloom in both spring and fall. Although they are generally frost resistant, because of their high-elevation origins, many were lost in 2011 when drought and extended cold temperatures dropped to 15F for 3 days.



12. Continuing north, along the Library's west side, you will find a pale, green-trunked tree in the corner at the top of the lawn area. This wonderful specimen is a Rock Fig, or ***Ficus petiolaris***, native to southern Mexico and Baja California. It is normally found only in stream beds where the invasive roots search out water. It suffers from freeze damage on the coldest nights in Tucson but has recovered and grown well at the top of this grassy hill facing southwest for more than 30 years. The tree was designated a UA Campus Arboretum Heritage Tree and adopted by Tom Sanders in honor of his parents.



13. The small trees in the planter to along the west side of the building are Crape Myrtle - ***Lagerstroemia indica***. This is an excellent, tropical-looking patio sized tree for Tucson. It is native to China, is deciduous, and has bright pink, showy flowers.



14. Closer to the building in the next planter to the north are Texas persimmons - *Diospyros texanum*. These are small, multi-trunked trees which produce fruit eaten by birds.



15. Finally, the walk ends after viewing several small Ghost Gums - *Eucalyptus papuana* that were planted by 4th Graders from the Blenman Elm School as part of a National Geographic Educational Grant in which they learned about Australia.



Now that you've taken a tour of this very small portion of campus, we hope you're inspired to continue your botanical explorations of other areas.

We invite you to explore the UA Arboretum again in person or in the cool dimly-lit environs of cyberspace via virtual tours offered on our website <http://arboretum.arizona.edu/treetours> http://arboretum.arizona.edu/tree_tours
The campus is open 7 days a week, absolutely free. Many trees are labeled, and more signs are being made.

During business hours M-F 8-4pm, you may pick up self-guided tour booklets of the UA Arboretum available for loan from Herring Hall. Pima Co. Master Gardeners also offer docent-guided tours several times each month throughout the academic year (August through April). There is much botany and a rich state history to learn from this living laboratory. We look forward to greeting you.

Contact the UA Campus Arboretum (email: [infoarboretum @ag.arizona.edu](mailto:infoarboretum@ag.arizona.edu) or phone: 621-7074 or 621-1582) for general questions regarding campus (or any) plants, and for access to the references used to make this plant walk.



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