

Montreat Treasured Trees

A Walk through Nature and History

Mostly along the paved path next to Assembly Drive with crossovers to the field and playground.

Each tree is marked with a plaque.
Approx 1 mile one-way.
Relatively flat.



Developed by Montreat Tree Board and the Presbyterian Heritage Center. Information also provided by Mary and Joe Standaert. In conjunction with the Treasured Tree Program of the Swannanoa Valley Tree Alliance.

Use the QR code below to open the online version and click on each tree for more information.



1 American Sycamore - *Platanus occidentalis*

Trees have creamy (newer) and brown bark. The trunks can provide shelter for wildlife. The Montreat cove is in the Swannanoa Valley which has been home to bear, elk, deer, mountain lions, buffalo, and many smaller creatures. Evidence suggests human presence here for over 12,000 years. The Cherokee and Catawba tribes hunted here. The Spanish explored here in the 1500s. White settlement began in the late 1700s. The hamlet of Grey Eagle, about 2 miles south, became Black Mountain in 1893.

2 Cucumber Magnolia - *Magnolia acuminata*

c 1900 Tree has beautiful white flowers in early spring on bare branches. Montreat was founded in 1897 as an ecumenical community. People traveled from the Black Mountain train station by foot, horseback, and hack. Remains of the livery stable still stand - the stone walls and roof along Assembly Drive opposite Shenandoah Terrace.

3 White Oak - *Quercus alba*

c 1860 Acorns are a preferred food for wildlife - deer, squirrels, and turkey. Most trees in this area were cleared in the 1890s for a sheep farm that failed when the sheep died after eating laurel. By 1906, John Huyler, a wealthy philanthropist and investor from New York, owned the land. He sold all of Montreat to Presbyterians in 1906.

4 Eastern Hemlock - *Tsuga canadensis*

c 1900 Hemlock stands are important for plant and animal biodiversity. The invasive wooly adelgid can kill a tree in less than 5 years. Montreaters protect these trees with chemical treatments and predator loricobius beetles. Montreat began to grow in the early 1900s as automobiles replaced horses and wagons. In 1933, Assembly Drive was paved. Montreat was incorporated as a town in 1967.

5 White Oak - *Quercus alba*

c 1855 The leaves are dark green, smooth, and almost glossy with a waxy coating that protects them from water loss and damage from insects and diseases. The southern headwaters of the Swannanoa River spring from the upper reaches of the Montreat cove.

6 Tulip Tree - *Liriodendron tulipifera*

c 1925 A tulip tree grows fast - about 2 feet per year reaching over 100 feet. Indigenous peoples used the trunks to make canoes and settlers used the lumber for building. In 1924, Hotel Montreat burned. The Mountain Retreat Association (MRA) immediately began plans to construct the Assembly Inn which opened in 1927.

7 Pignut Hickory - *Carya glabra*

c 1900 Can live 300 years with gold fall foliage. Humans don't typically consider the nuts edible, but many animals do - chipmunks squirrels, rabbits, racoons, wild turkey, deer and hogs. The nearby red, wooden building, completed in 1900, was the church, community building, and school. Now, a US Post Office with mailboxes - no home delivery.

8 Black Gum or Black Tupelo - *Nyssa sylvatica*

c 1900 A favorite of bees with high nectar production. Squirrels and racoons often live where limbs fall off and leave behind a hole in the trunk. A nearby wooden bridge was removed after damage from Hurricane Helene in 2024. Plans for a replacement are in developmental stages.

9 American Sycamore - *Platanus occidentalis*

c 1915 Trees have male and female flowers on separate twigs. The fruits, a brownish woody ball, ripen in October. The Mt. Mitchell Railroad ran through the cove to support logging and tourism. Then the rail bed first became a toll road and is now a hiking trail.

10 White Oak - *Quercus alba*

c 1825 Live up to 400 years. Bark is light gray, but the finished wood is white. While this tree was spared the Montreat sawmill blade, other oaks were used in buildings. In 1907, the Alba Hotel was built just above the lake to accommodate a growing number of visitors. The Alba burned in 1945; Howerton Hall is now on this site.

11 Northern Red Oak - *Quercus rubra*

c 1865 Growing straight and tall with strong wood used for furniture and building. The acorns are bitter, so many animals don't prefer to eat them. In 1922, Anderson Auditorium was completed to provide a large facility for growing conferences. The river rock for the structure came from Flat Creek.

12 White Oak - *Quercus alba*

c 1925 Strong and non-porous wood used for drumsticks, buckets, barrels, and ships. Acorns are edible for humans when cooked. Anderson Auditorium pews were scratchy woven oak strips that caused runs in stockings. When Anderson Auditorium burned and was rebuilt in 1940, the builders choose American chestnut downed by blight for pews and solved the issue.

13 Red Maple - *Acer rubrum*

c 1925 Quick growers up to 100 feet with red fall leaves. The sap can be used to make syrup, but it is not as famous or sweet as Sugar Maple tree syrup. The Montreat sawmill was not far from this site along Flat Creek. In 1923, Susan Graham, whose house was across Assembly Drive, agreed to pay for an improved dam if this noisy sawmill was removed - which soon happened.

