Quick Identification Guide

Types of Coniferous Trees

A conifer is a tree that bears cones and has needle-like or scale-like leaves that are typically evergreen (larches are an exception).

Pine & Larch

Needles are in bundles or clusters of two, three, or five.

Fir

Soft and flat needles form singly on twigs in two rows and grow outward and appear flat.

Spruce

Sharp-pointed striped needles with diamond-shaped cross-section. Needles are attached all around the twig and have the look of a bristle brush.

Cypress or False-Cedar

Scale-like leaves that grow on flattened sprays or all around the twig.

Twig Arrangement

Twig arrangement or orientation can help identify a tree's species!

Alternate Opposite

Alternate branching is much more common than opposite branching. When you spot an opposite branching tree, you can easily narrow down its possible species .

In New York State, native plants that are opposite can be remembered with the "MADCAP Horse" mnemonic:

Maples
Ashes
Dogwoods
Caprifoliacae (honeysuckle)
Horse Chestnut

Living Land Acknowledgement

Queens Botanical Garden acknowledges that it is situated on the traditional land of the Matinecock people, the first people of Flushing, Queens. We pay respect to the Matinecock people, past, present, and future, their ancestors who have stewarded the land for generations, and their continuing presence on this land today. We honor these origins by continuing to steward the land with sustainable practices, love for community, and commitment to equity, as well as helping to educate the public about the history, significance, contributions, and impact of indigenous peoples and culture.

We thank Tecumseh Ceaser, Artist and Cultural Consultant of the Matinecock Tribal Nation, for his guidance as we reflect on our acknowledgement.

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Queens Botanical Garden

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Winter Plant Walk

Queens Botanical Garden | **Where people, plants, and cultures meet.**

Winter Plant Map

Blue Atlas Cedar
Cedrus atlantica

Locaton: Main Street Entrance

Native to the Atlas Mountains of Morocco, blue atlas cedar trees are endangered due to wood harvesting and fires. They are known for their distinct, full, **silvery-blue foliage.** These two evergreen specimens that greet visitors on Main Street are the original trees that framed the entrance to the five-acre "Gardens On Parade" exhibit at the 1939 New York World's Fair in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. Local residents saved and expanded the original exhibit, opening it as "The Queens Botanical Garden Society" in 1946. The trees and parts of the exhibit were relocated to the Garden's present location in 1964.

Eastern Red Cedar
Juniperus virginiana

Location: Fragrance Walk

Also known as red juniper or Virginian juniper, the eastern red cedar is a slow-growing coniferous evergreen, meaning it bears cones and needles that do not fall off. Native to eastern North America, it is known for its **reddish-brown bark formed in narrow strips.** Their berries and cones are often feasted on by wildlife, including birds like bluebirds and cedar waxwings.

Winterberry
Ilex verticillata

Location: Four Seasons Border

Native to eastern North America, winterberry is an ornamental holly bush that features **bright-red berries.** Another fun name for winterberry is fever bush! Some birds, like the American robin, rely on their fruit as a major food source. Their berries are not edible for human consumption, however, because they are considered toxic.

Anglo-Japanese Yew
Taxus x media cv.

Location: Woodland Trail

The Anglo-Japanese yew is a common evergreen landscape shrub that is a hybrid, a cultivar of the English yew known for its ornamental qualities and the Japanese yew valued for its winter hardiness. Take note of the **dark green hue of its foliage and upright and column-shaped structure** that gives the landscape height and texture!

American Holly
Ilex opaca

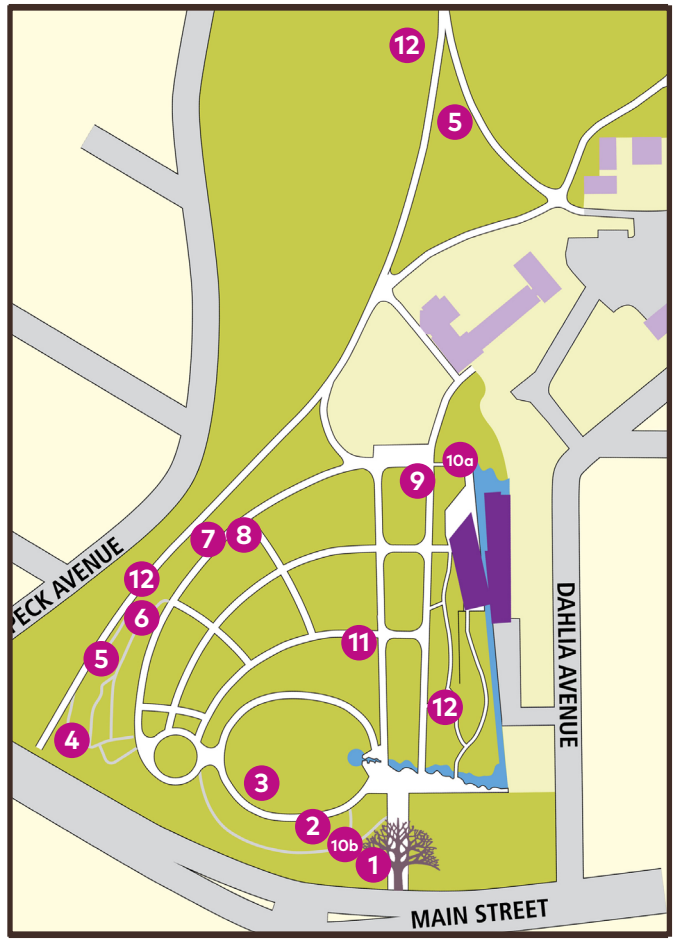
Location: Woodland Trail

Also called the Christmas holly or yule holly, the American holly is a tall evergreen tree that features **spine-tipped leaves. Bright-red berries** that song and game birds enjoy are found on female plants when the male plants are growing nearby. They can grow as tall as 60 feet!

Gold Dust Aucuba
Aucuba japonica

Location: Woodland Trail

The yellow specks and blotches on the gold dust aucuba are what make this shrub stand out year-round! The drought-tolerant and shade-loving shrub also produces tiny, light purple flowers in early spring. Notice the bright green and waxy texture on the foliage of this hardy plant.



Scan QR code to learn more about plants that are in season during your visit!

Fun fact! Despite the conditions of the cold-weather season, evergreen plants have foliage that remains green throughout the year. Evergreens have evolved to store water efficiently due to the scarce resources and have adapted to support lower photosynthesis and conserve water during dry periods.

Photos: Jess Brey, Oliver Lopez
Cover: *Hamamelis vernalis,* witch Hazel

Himalayan Pine
Pinus wallichiana

Location: Upper Woodland Trail

The Himalayan pine is native to–you guessed it–the Himalayas! It can be found in parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and China. Its leaves form in **fascicles, or bundles of five long needles that dangle slightly.** Its wide-spreading branches form a broadly pyramidal shape.

Southern Magnolia
Magnolia grandiflora

Location: Across from Perennial Garden

A broad-leaved evergreen at QBG, the leaves of the southern magnolia has **waxy coating** that protects them from cold temperatures and water loss and makes photosynthesis possible in winter. As a result, their foliage will stay on and leaf out with beautiful **large deep green leaves** throughout the cold season. Come back in late spring and early June to see it bloom fragrant, creamy, white flowers!

Red Maple
Acer rubrum

Location: Oak Allée by Wedding Garden

The red maple can be easily identified in winter as its **green stems and buds turn red with red flowers blooming in March.** Its bark is rough at the base with many joining **fissures and runs smoother in light grey towards the top,** reminiscent of snakes climbing up the trunk!

Witch Hazel
a: Hamamelis virginiana
Location: Herb Garden
b: Hamamelia mollis
Location: Fragrance Walk

This shrub is native to southern and central U.S. and shows off **yellow or orange flowers** December through January. The bark of witch hazel is heavily fragrant and is commonly extracted for use in beauty products like lotions and perfumes and in herbal tinctures to treat insect bites. QBG has another variety of Chinese witch hazel, *Hamamelis mollis*, located in the Fragrance Walk, that features blooms February through March.

Norway Spruce
Picea abies

Location: Pinetum

You probably know the Norway spruce for its popularity as the classic Christmas tree. But did you know it can be used to flavor beer? Originally from Europe, the Norway spruce is iconic with its **dark green foliage on branches hanging downward.** They grow up to 100 feet tall in the U.S., making them a top choice for holiday showcases like the annual one at Rockefeller Center.

Eastern White Pine
Pinus strobus

Location: Green Roof, Arboretum

The only native pine that has **five needles in a bundle.** It represents peace with the five needles symbolizing the five tribes comprising the Haudenosaunee Confederacy–Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca nations. The Tuscarora nation joined after as the sixth nation. Their consititution is often described as the oldest, participatory democracy of mankind.