

Grab a trail guide or download the Avenza maps app (find directions on how at the Visitor Center) to start your journey!

Description:

Length: 1-mile round trip
 Avg. time: 30-45 minutes
 Trail difficulty: moderate (includes some stairs, not stroller friendly)
 Route: Start at large trail head with labeled park map to left of Visitor Center. Trail continues up fenced ramp to **Lovers' Leap Trail's** first overlook. You will start to notice markers labeled with numbers and species of trees mentioned in this brochure. Next, head up the stairs to the left and continue up the hill (**Tunnel Hill Trail**). Continue on this trail until you've reached the last tree marker on the trail (Paw Paw)- some numbers are missing due to damage to trees or markers (15, 21). From here, you may continue on **Tunnel Hill Trail** to the picnic area or turn around to head back to the starting point at the Visitor Center. Explore the trails and enjoy the scenery as you learn more about our native trees.

- 1. Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*):** Also referred to as hemlock spruce, this tree is an ornamental evergreen in the pine family. They grow well in acidic soil, cool places and out of rock faces, especially shaded, north-facing bluffs. The bark, a distinguishing feature, is grayish-brown and smooth in young trees and reddish-brown and scaly with wide ridges and furrows in older trees. Fruit are light brown cones (3/4 inch long with rounded, entire scales) that mature in early fall. Male flowers in late April-June. **Fun Fact:** Was once a commercial source of tannin in leather production. **Conservation:** Although capable of living 800 years, the hemlock woolly adelgid (invasive insect) is negatively affecting populations.
- 2. American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*):** This tree can be found in old fields and strip mines and along stream banks, flood plains, edges of lakes and swamps. Distinct features include their large 3-5 lobed leaves and green-brown and gray patches on the bark stemming from the flakes peeling off. The wood is used for furniture parts, flooring, particle and fiberboard and paper pulp. **Fun Fact:** Old hollowed-out sycamore trunks were used by wildlife and occasionally as shelter for pioneers (see Sycamore Camp story on **Stock Creek Trail**).
- 3. Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*):** This medium-sized tree in the pea family often has a forking, crooked and angled trunk and beanlike seeds. Their white pea-shaped flowers show in drooping clusters in late spring (late April-June) and are an important nectar source for honey production. The tree grows in dry, sandy and rocky soils. **Fun Fact:** This tree is often used for erosion control and reclaiming mine sites. **Conservation:** Damaged by many insects and diseases (locust borers, leafminers and heart rot fungi).



Please post your favorite NTSP tree or hiking photo to one of the following:

Instagram/Twitter(X):

@VAStateParks

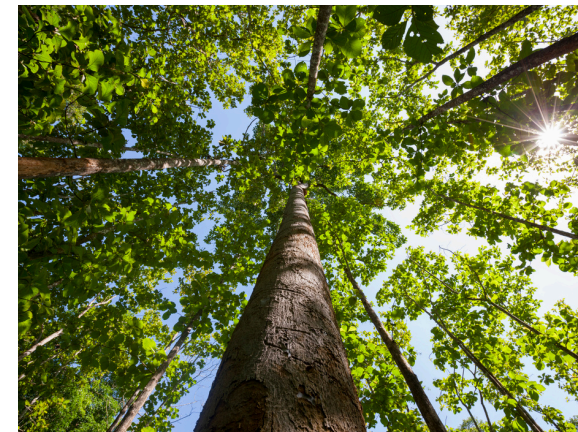
Facebook: Virginia State Parks

#NTSP



Natural Tunnel State Park
 1420 Natural Tunnel Pkwy,
 Duffield, VA 24244
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Natural Tunnel State Park



Common Trees of Southwest Virginia

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4. **Post Oak** (*Quercus stellata*): This tree in the beech family grows in sandy, rocky ridges and moist, loamy soils of flood plains. Flowers bloom March-May and their leaves are often used for nest building by squirrels, birds and raccoons. **Fun Fact:** The name “post oak” comes from its historic use in fence posts, as it is resistant to decay. The wood has also commonly been used for railroad ties.

5. **Eastern Redcedar** (*Juniperus virginiana*): Also referred to as juniper, this evergreen tree in the cypress family has light brown or reddish-brown bark that often peels in thin strands. They are resistant to extreme temperatures and drought. This colorful and fragrant wood is often used for furniture and carvings. **Fun Fact:** Cedar oil from the wood and leaves is used in medicine and perfumes. The tree is also the alternate host for cedar-apple rust, a fungus which causes spots on apple leaves and fruit, so they are often avoided around apple orchards.

6. **White Oak** (*Quercus alba*): This is the classic eastern oak tree, with wide spreading branches, growing best in moist, well-drained uplands. The bark is white or ashy gray, with loose scales or even blocky, with large plates. The fruit is an egg-shaped acorn with a cap that always detaches in maturity. **Fun Fact:** Often are used for whiskey and wine barrels and shipbuilding due to a substance called “tyloses,” that make the wood watertight.

7. **Sugar Maple** (*Acer saccharum*): This commonly known tree is famous for their multicolored display of foliage in the fall and the sweet sap that Native Americans used for centuries to make maple syrup and would later teach colonists to use as well. The seeds are often used as “helicopters,” due to their propeller-like shape.

8. **Red Maple** (*Acer rubrum*): This tree tolerates the widest variety of soil conditions of any North American forest species. It gets its name from its display of red flowers, fruit and leaf stalks and is a beautiful ornamental tree for its fall foliage. **Fun Fact:** The pioneers used bark extracts for ink and dye.

9. **Sourwood** (*Oxydendrum arboreum*): This tree has grayish-brown bark with deep furrows and scaly ridges. The name refers to the sour taste of the glossy leaves, which turn a brilliant red in the fall. The flowers are urn-shaped and droop in a cluster, resembling lily-of-the-valley flowers, blooming in mid-summer. **Fun Fact:** Bees use the nectar from the flowers to make a unique honey.

10. **Flowering Dogwood** (*Cornus florida*): As the state tree and flower of Virginia, this tree is very often used as an ornamental tree due to its beautiful yellowish-green flowers, white petal-like bracts, red fruit and red foliage in the fall. Its wood was previously used for things like mallets, handles and spools. Although poisonous to humans, the berries feed many of our bird and mammal friends. **Fun Fact:** Native Americans used the bark to treat malaria and extracted red dye from the roots.

11. **Mockernut Hickory** (*Carya alba*): This tree grows in moist uplands among oaks and pines. The bark is irregularly furrowed. They have fine-toothed, shiny, dark green compound leaves (usually with 7 leaflets). They are very aromatic when crushed and turn yellow in the fall. Hickory nuts are similar to walnuts and are in the same family. The wood is used for furniture, tool handles, baseball bats, skis and smoking meats.

12. **Black Gum** (*Nyssa sylvatica*): This tree grows in moist soils at many types of sites from marshlands to uplands. This is a slender tree that is often used for landscaping. It has oval, glossy leaves that turn scarlet in the fall. The fruit is a blue-black berrylike fruit maturing in autumn and is often eaten by wildlife. Male and female flowers bloom on separate trees and in clusters. **Fun Fact:** Trunks were used in colonial days as places for bees to make their hives. The flower’s nectar is used to make honey.

13. **American Beech** (*Fagus grandifolia*): Thick tree with a distinctive smooth bark, horizontal branches and egg-shaped leaves that are coarsely toothed and change to a brilliant yellow in the fall. Fruit consists of prickly burs that contain two pyramid-shaped brown nuts that are edible and mature in the fall. The male flowers in the spring.

14. **Tulip Poplar or Yellow Poplar** (*Liriodendron tulipifera*): Named for their tulip-shaped leaves and flowers presenting in the spring (orange at base with rounded, green petals, used for honey production), these trees are some of the tallest hardwood trees in the region. In modern times, wood is used for furniture, crates, toys, musical instruments and pulpwood. **Fun Fact:** Early settlers used the bark to cover roofs and hollowed out the trunks to make lightweight canoes, same as magnolia trees. Natives would make carrying vessels from the bark.

16. **Black Walnut** (*Juglans nigra*): Large walnut tree with an open, rounded crown of dark green, aromatic foliage. Leaves are pinnately compound and can have 9-21 leaflets that turn yellow in the fall. The bark is dark brown and furrowed into scaly ridges. One of the most coveted native hardwoods, used especially for furniture, gunstocks and veneer. Provides edible nuts and blackish dye from husks. **Fun Fact:** Many plants are unable to grow around black walnuts due to the tree secreting a toxic chemical called juglone.

17. **Chestnut Oak** (*Quercus prinus*): Also called rock oak due to its commonality to grow on rocky slopes and ridges. It is a large tree with chestnut-like foliage that turns yellow in the fall. The bark is gray and eventually becomes thick and deeply furrowed. It is often planted as an ornamental tree, covered with masses of pink flowers in the spring. **Fun Fact:** The bark used to be used for tanning leather because of its high tannin content. Wood is similar to and sometimes marketed as white oak.

18. **Eastern Redbud or “Judas-Tree”** (*Cercis canadensis*): This is a small tree with a short trunk and spreading branches. Vibrant pink flowers (rarely white) are visible in the spring and often dot the sides of the roadway in most areas of Southwest Virginia. The heart-shaped, pointed leaves turn yellow in the fall. The bark is dark gray or brown and mostly smooth, eventually becoming furrowed into scaly plates. **Fun Fact:** Bark was historically used to treat dysentery.

19. **Black Cherry** (*Prunus serotina*): Aromatic tree with a tall trunk abundant with small white flowers in spring. Produces small dark red to blackish cherries, maturing in late summer (slightly bitter, but juicy). The largest and most important native cherry species, the valuable wood is used for furniture, paneling, instruments, handles and toys. Placement mimics bird perches since they spread the seeds easily. **Fun Fact:** Wild cherry syrup, a cough medicine, is obtained from the bark jelly and wine is prepared from the fruit.

20. **Green Ash** (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*): Tree with dense inner bark and shiny green foliage. A hardy, fast-growing shade tree, Green ash is planted on soil banks after strip mining and can tolerate flood conditions for over 40% of the growing season. **Fun Fact:** The most widespread native ash, it extends westward nearly to the Rocky Mountains. **Conservation:** The emerald ash borer (invasive insect) is steadily wiping out ash trees throughout Virginia in recent years, but treatment for these trees in Virginia State Parks has started to ramp up.

22. **Pawpaw** (*Asimina triloba*): A small tree or shrub that often forms thickets, the pawpaw has unpleasant-smelling (when crushed) pear-shaped leaves, purplish-brown flowers and a famous kidney-shaped fruit with sweet, custard-like pulp surrounding several large, flat seeds. **Fun Fact:** Leaves are the only food source for caterpillars of the zebra swallowtail butterfly.