

# WELCOME TO THE WILLIS HOMESTEAD TRAIL!

*Trail Length: 4.2 miles*



## Flora Frequency Guide:

**COMMON:** Common in the trail and park.

**UNCOMMON:** Uncommon in the trail and park.

**RARE:** Rare. Only one or two in the park.

## Sparkleberry

COMMON

*Winterberry or Tree Huckleberry*



A shrub or tree with short trunk, irregular crown of crooked branches, small, glossy, elliptical leaves, and shiny black berries that mature in the autumn. This tree grows in sandy and rocky

dry uplands, in forest understory and clearings. Common from Virginia south to central Florida, west from southeast Texas and north to southeast Kansas.

There is no known commercial use of this tree. Although the berries do not taste good to humans, they are an important source of food for wildlife.

## White Ash

COMMON



A large tree with a straight trunk and rounded crown of leaves; grows to heights of 80 feet.

Grows in moist loamy soils of valleys and slopes with other hardwoods.

The park is also home to green ash and pumpkin ash; it is difficult to differentiate between the different species of ash, as there is very little difference among them. This example was determined to be a white ash based on the location in which it is found; green and pumpkin ash usually grows in moist lowland soils rather than the drier soils on the ridges.

## Post Oak

*Iron Oak*

**COMMON**



A large tree with dense, rounded crown and very distinctive leaves shaped to suggest a Maltese cross. Tree grows to a height of 70 feet with a trunk up to 2 feet in diameter.

This tree grows well in sandy, gravelly and rocky ridges; also in moist loamy soils of flood plains. Wood from this tree is very dense and heavy; it is used for railroad crossties, posts and construction timbers. The tree produces large numbers of small acorns that mature in the autumn and are an important food source for wildlife.

## White Oak

*Stave Oak*

**COMMON**



The classic majestic oak tree of southern forests with wide-spreading branches and a rounded crown. The white oak often grows heights of 80 to 100 feet, sometimes even higher, in moist

well-drained uplands and lowlands, often in pure stands. The white oak produces very high-grade lumber used for all purposes; it is sometimes called 'stave oak' because the wood is used in making barrels for alcoholic drinks. The tree produces large numbers of large acorns that are an important food source for wildlife; white acorns are among the very favorite food for deer and squirrels.

## Dogwood

*Eastern Flowering*

COMMON



Easily one of the most beautiful and well-known tree in the southern forests. It is a small tree that grows to heights of up to 30 feet with a crown spreading branches and a trunk up to 8 inches in

diameter. The tree is covered with beautiful white flowers in the early spring, bright red fruit in late spring and scarlet foliage in the autumn. The very hard wood is extremely shock resistant and used for making spools, small pulleys, mallet heads and jeweler's blocks. Native Americans used the bark and roots for medicinal purposes and extracted a red dye from the roots.

# Loblolly Pine

*Oldfield Pine*

**COMMON**



These pines are very large, resinous and fragrant trees with a rounded crown of branches, often growing to heights of 100 or more feet with trunk diameters of 3 feet. Grows from deep, poorly

drained flood plains to well-drained hills and uplands; is among the fastest growing of southern pines.

It is very important commercially grown tree, prized for its lumber. Loblolly pines are also commonly known as “bull” pines for their giant size. The word “loblolly” means ‘mud puddle’ where these trees often grow.

## Rusty Blackhaw

**COMMON**

Rusty Nannyberry



A small tree on large shrub with a short trunk and a spreading irregular crown. This is one of the first trees to bloom in spring and is covered with clusters of small white flowers. The trunks are

covered in gray, rough, furrowed bark; the undersides of the leaves are covered with short, furry red hairs. The fruit matures to a blue color in the early fall giving the tree its common name of 'Bluehaw.'

No known commercial use, but an important source of food for wildlife.

# American Elm

*White Elm*

**COMMON**



A large, handsome tree with an enlarged buttressed base and wide-spreading branches forming a vase-shaped crown. Once very common on city streets and parks, the

American Elm has been decimated by a fungus accidentally introduced in the 1930s. This tree grows in moist soils of valleys and flood plains in mixed hardwood forests.

The wood is used commercially for containers, furniture and paneling.

## Sweetgum

*Redgum or Sapgum*

COMMON



A large tree with a straight trunk and a round spreading crown. Easily distinguished by its 5-to-7 lobed, saw-toothed leaves that are very aromatic when crushed. The leaves are glossy green,

maple-like in shape and turn bright red or scarlet in fall. Produces large numbers of drooping brown balls with numerous seeds, with two long prickly points at the end. Grows in moist soils of valleys and lower slopes in mixed forests.

The lumber is highly prized and is second only to oak. It is used in furniture, cabinets, veneer, plywood, pulpwood, barrels and

boxes. Gum from the resin under the bark has been used for medicinal purposes and in chewing gum. The sweetgum is often planted as an ornamental.

## Willow Oak

COMMON

*Pin Oak or Peach Oak*



A tall tree with conical crown of slender branches ending in very slender, pin-like twigs with willow like leaves.

Grows to heights of 80 feet with trunks up to 2.5 feet in diameter. Distinguished by leaves up to 4.5

inches in length, narrow oblong or lance-shaped. The leaves are glossy, dark green on top and dull green or gray on the undersides, turning pale yellow in fall.

Willow oaks grow in moist alluvial soils of stream bottomlands or flats; sometimes in pure stands.

The wood is popular for firewood and the tree is often planted as an ornamental or

shade tree. It produces large numbers of acorns in fall, attracting large numbers of wildlife, most notably, squirrels, deer, and turkey.

## Winged Elm

*Cork Elm*

COMMON



A tree with a short trunk and an open, rounded crown; grows to heights of 40 to 80 feet with a trunk up to 1.5 inches

diameter. Grows in dry uplands and moist valleys, often in abandoned fields. The name comes from the very distinctive broad, cork wings present on some of the branches and twigs.

No known commercial uses, although in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the fibrous inner bark was made into rope to fasten covers on cotton bales.

## Possumhaw

*Winterberry or Swamp Holly*

**COMMON**



A deciduous small tree or shrub with a spreading crown and bright red berries. The berries are presented in

winter on the bare gray limbs of female trees; the male trees do not produce berries.

No known commercial use for the wood, but the tree is an important food source for wildlife.

## **Black Cherry**

*Wild or Rum Cherry*

**COMMON**



An aromatic tree with a tall trunk and oblong crown; growing up to 80 feet in height with a trunk diameter of up to 2 feet. The bark is dark gray, smooth, with horizontal lines; becoming irregularly

fissured and scaly. The leaves and bark, when crushed, have a very distinctive cherry-like odor and bitter taste.

This tree is the largest of the native cherries; the wood is used for furniture, paneling, handles and toys. Wild cherry syrup, a cough medicine, is obtained from the bark. Jelly and wine are prepared from the fruit which is dark red to black in color

with a slightly bitter taste. The tree is an important food source for wildlife.

## Fringetree

*Granddaddy Greybeard*

**UNCOMMON**



A shrub or small tree with a short trunk and narrow crown; has showy masses of fragrant, lacy, white flowers. This tree can grow to heights of 30 feet with a trunk diameter of

usually not more than six inches.

No known commercial uses. This tree is among the last to put on new leaves in the spring; it is easily noticed by its long streamers of white flowers that hang beneath the branches, earning the tree its common name.

## Eastern Red Bud

**UNCOMMON**



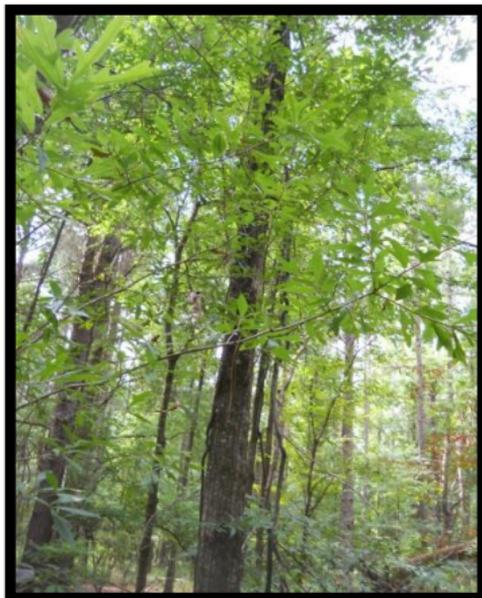
Tree with a short trunk and spreading crown of twisted branches; covered with pink flowers in early spring. Grows in moist upland soils in mixed hardwood forests.

Produces long, flat oblong pods that contain several bean-like seeds.

No known commercial use for the tree, although it is commonly planted as an ornamental. One of the first trees to flower in the early spring, it is covered in bright pink flowers. Another tree very common in the park, it brightens the dark, early spring forest with its showy displays of color.

## Southern Red Oak

COMMON



Large tree with open, rounded crown of large spreading branches; twigs are rust-colored hairs. The bark is dark gray, becoming furrowed into broad ridges and plates. The leaves are shiny

green above, with rust-colored or gray soft hairs beneath and turn brown in the fall.

The wood is prized as firewood and is used commercially in furniture, cabinets and veneers. Produces large numbers of large acorns: important food source for wildlife. One of the most easily recognized trees in the southern forest.

## Red Maple

COMMON



A large tree with a narrow, rounded compact crown and reddish flowers, fruit, leafstalks and autumn foliage. The tree grows heights of 60 to 90 feet with a trunk of up to 2.5 feet. The leaves

are broad with the three lobes common to most maple trees; the stems of the leaves are usually red in color. The tree prefers areas of wet or moist soils of stream banks and swamps, although it is often found in drier soils.

Red maple is often planted as an ornamental or shade tree. Early pioneers made ink, cinnamon-brown and black dyes from extracts of red maple bark.

## Cow Oak

**RARE**

### *Swamp Chestnut Oak*

*(located approximately 25 feet off the trail)*



Cow oak, also commonly called Swamp Chestnut, oak is an oak tree with alternate, simple,

leaves with a margin large teeth, 4 to 8 inches long, 3 to 5 inches wide, dark green and shiny above, pale and downy below. The bark is similar to white oak or post oak. The bark is ash gray, scaly, with age developing irregular furrows and becoming darker. Cow oaks grow up to 80 feet with a narrow crown. The acorns of the cow oak are a favorite of deer. Finding a good producing tree during deer season can be a big plus for hunters. But the acorns don't last long and might be long gone when rifle season opens.

# Mockernut Hickory

*White Hickory*

**COMMON**



A tall straight-trunked tree with a rounded crown; grows to heights of up to 80 feet with trunks up to 2 feet in diameter. The bark is gray in color and furrowed into narrow forking ridges. The

leaves are very aromatic when crushed and turn bright yellow or gold in autumn. Grows in moist uplands and produces large numbers of 4-sided nuts.

The wood is prized commercially for furniture, flooring, tool handles, baseball bats, skis and veneers. Hickory has a high fuel content and is the preferred wood for smoking meats and making charcoal. The

fall foliage stands out dramatically against the darker colors of the autumn forest.

## Florida Maple

**RARE**

Southern Sugar Maple



A medium-sized tree with a spreading rounded crown. Grows to heights of 60 feet with a diameter of 2 feet. The leaves are classical maple-shapes with 3-to-5 shallow, wavy-edged lobes;

turning yellow and red in the fall. Grows in the moist soils of valleys and uplands.

No known commercial uses for the wood. Florida maple is the southern relative of the Sugar Maple, although the Florida maple is not tapped commercially for sugar.

## Cherrybark Oak

COMMON



This tree is a variant of Southern Red Oak with smooth cherry-like bark with short ridges. Usually grows in moist sites and is commonly found in the Carolinas and the lower Mississippi

Valley.

The wood is marketed as 'Red Oak'. Its acorns also provide a major food source for wildlife.

## Red Mulberry

UNCOMMON



Medium sized tree with short trunk, broad rounded crown and milky sap. The leaves are dull, dark green above, with soft hairs beneath, turning yellow in the fall.

Produces cylindrical

berries, dark red to purple, composed of many tiny, bead-like one-seeded fruits, sweet and juicy, very edible.

The wood is used for fence posts, furniture and agricultural implements. People and wildlife (especially songbirds) eat the fruit. Native Americans wove the fibrous inner bark into cloth.

## Prickly Ash

**RARE**

*Toothache Tree*



This deciduous plant has pinnately compound leaves with 5–11 membranous leaflets. It has

axillary flower and fruit clusters with hairy buds. The dark green leaves are bitter-aromatic, with crenate margins. The stalked follicles are green and then turn red through deep blue through black. It is a dioecious shrub and can grow up to 2 meters tall. Stems have erect prickles, sometimes curved, which occur either solitary or paired; they range from 4-13 mm long. Leaflets are opposite, usually oval shaped with a tapering point or sometimes ovate. Flowers appear as umbrella-like clusters from 2-12 inch small terminal to axillary umbellate clusters.

## Water Oak

COMMON

*Spotted Oak or Possum Oak*



A tree with conical or rounded crown of slender branches with small leaves. The leaves are up to 5 inches long and 2 inches wide, wedge shaped with slightly 3-lobed tip. Grows

in moist, wet soils of flood plains and stream bottomlands. An excellent shade tree, but relatively short-lived. Produces large numbers of small acorns in the second year; important wildlife food source.

## Saw Palmetto

UNCOMMON



A hardy plant; extremely slow-growing, and long-lived, with some plants possibly

being as old as 500–700 years. Saw palmetto is a fan palm, with the leaves that terminating in a rounded fan of about 20 leaflets. The leafstalk is armed with fine, sharp teeth or spines that give the species its common name. The leaves are 1–2 meters in length, the leaflets 50–100 cm long. The flowers are yellowish-white, about 5 mm across, produced in dense compound panicles up to 60 cm long. The fruit is a large reddish-black drupe and is an important food source for wildlife and historically for humans.

# Honeylocust

**UNCOMMON**

*Thorny-Locust or Sweet-Locust*



Large, spiny tree with open, flattened crown of spreading branches. The tree is noted for its

gray-brown or black bark that is fissured into scaly ridges, with stout brown spines, usually branched, up to 8 inches long. Grows in moist soils of flood plains, but is also found in well-drained uplands. The tree produces fruit that is contained in dark brown pods up to 16 inches long; each pod contains several bean-like seeds in a sweet edible pulp.

The spines of this tree were sometimes used as pins and the tree is sometimes cultivated as ornamentals or to attract

wildlife. The sweet pulp of the seedpods is a strong attractant to all forms of wildlife.

## Shortleaf pine

**COMMON**



A species of pine native to the eastern United States from southern most New York State, south to northern Florida, west to eastern Oklahoma, and southwest to eastern Texas. The tree is

variable in form, sometimes straight, sometimes crooked, with an irregular crown. This tree reaches heights of 20-30 meters with a trunk diameter of 0.5-0.9 meters. The leaves are needle-like, in bundles of two and three mixed together, and from 7-11 cm long. The cones are 4-7 cm long, with thin scales with a transverse keel and a short prickle. Shortleaf pine seedlings develop a persistent J-shaped crook near the ground surface. This pine is

a source of wood pulp, plywood veneer,  
and lumber for a variety of uses.

## French Mulberry

*American Beautyberry*

**COMMON**



A thicket forming shrub with thin branches, a member of the verbena family. Soft light green,

paired leaves; distinguished by clusters of purple berries in the fall. Often found on cut-over pine and oak woodlands along streams.

No known commercial use, but sometimes grown as an ornamental. Deer browse on the foliage; birds and other wildlife eat the berries.

## Black Oak

**RARE**

*Yellow Oak*

*(located behind the bench)*



Medium to large tree with open spreading crown. Large leaves with 7 to 9 lobes, shiny green above and yellow green beneath. The bark is gray and smooth, becoming blackish, thick

and rough with deeply furrowed ridges. The inner bark is yellow or orange and very bitter. Grows on dry uplands and rocky ridges.

Distinguished by the yellow inner bark, formerly a source of tannin, medicine and a yellow dye.

## American Holly

*Holly or White Holly*

**COMMON**



Evergreen with narrow, rounded dense crown of spiny leaves, small white flowers and

bright red berries. Grows in moist or well-drained soils in mixed hardwood forests.

Often used as Christmas decorations and as an ornamental. Many kinds of songbirds, gamebirds, and mammals eat the bitter berries.

## Witch-Hazel

*Southern Witch-Hazel*

**COMMON**



Slightly aromatic shrub or small tree with a broad, open crown of spreading branches and small

yellow flowers present in autumn or winter. Grows in moist soil in the understory of hardwood forests.

The aromatic extract of leaves and bark is used in mildly astringent lotions. A myth of witchcraft held that a forked branch of witch-hazel could be used to find underground water.

## Winged Sumac

**UNCOMMON**

*Shining Sumac or Dwarf Sumac*



A shrub or a small tree with a short trunk and open crown of stout, spreading branches; up to 25 feet in height. The leaves are shiny green and nearly hairless above,

paler and covered with fine hairs beneath, turning dark reddish purple in the fall.

## Waxmyrtle

COMMON



A small tree or large shrub. It is adaptable to many habitats, growing naturally in wetlands,

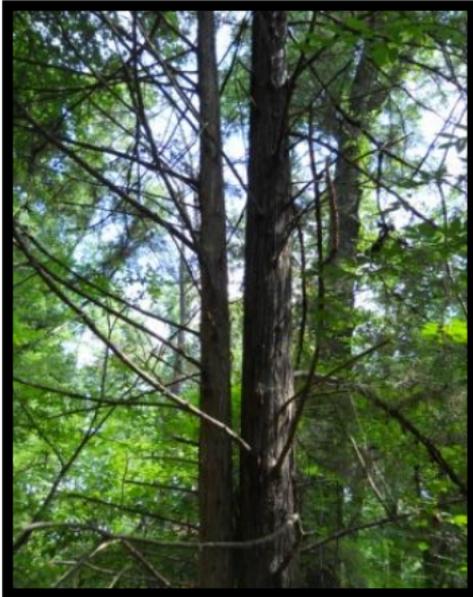
near rivers and streams, sand dunes, fields, hillsides, pine barrens, and in both coniferous and mixed-broadleaf forests. Waxmyrtle is an evergreen. The glandular leaves are long, have a leathery texture and serrated edges, and contain aromatic compounds. The plant is dioecious, with male and female flowers borne in catkins on separate plants. Male flowers have three or four stamens, and are surrounded by short bracts. The female flowers develop into fruit, which are globular and surrounded by a natural wax-like coating. The species flowers from late winter to

spring, and bear fruit in late summer or fall.  
No endosperm is present on the seeds.

## Eastern Red Cedar

*Red Juniper*

**COMMON**



An evergreen, aromatic tree with trunk often angled and buttressed at base with narrow, compact crown. Leaves are dark green and needle-like, very aromatic, when crushed.

The bark is reddish-brown, thin, fibrous and shredded. The cones are berry-like and dark blue in color. Grows from dry uplands, to flood plains, to swamps; often found in abandoned fields and fence rows.

## **Black Tupelo**

**UNCOMMON**

*Black Gum or Pepperidge*



Tree with a dense, conical crown and glossy foliage that turns scarlet in autumn; grows to heights of up to 100 feet and diameters of up to 3 feet. The bark is gray or dark brown, thick and rough,

deeply furrowed into rectangular or irregular ridges.

Prized as ornamental or shade trees, it is also a honey plant, drawing multitudes of birds and insects with its aroma. The juicy fruit is a very important food source for wildlife.

## Sassafras

UNCOMMON



An aromatic tree or thicket-forming shrub with variously shaped leaves and narrow crown of short, thick branches. The bark is gray-brown, becoming thick and deeply furrowed. Grows

in moist sandy soils of uplands and valleys; often found in old fields, along fence rows and forest opening.

The roots and bark supply oil of sassafras used to perfume soaps and make sassafras tea; has been used to flavor root beer.

## Parsley Hawthorne

**COMMON**



Small tree or shrub with wide-spreading slender branches and broad open crown of parsley-like foliage.

Grows in moist soil of valleys and bottomlands.

Very easy to recognize with its small, divided leaves and small, bright red fruit. No known commercial use, but the fruit strongly attracts birds.

## Baccharis

**COMMON**



A small shrub, with both straight up and low lying branches. It is generally sticky.

The stems are prostrate to erect with branches spreading or ascending. The leaves are oblanceolate, thinner at the stem than at the tip and toothed. The flower heads are pyramidal in shape. The baccharis is dioecious, having separate male and female plants within the species

## Muscadine Grape

**COMMON**



The berries range from bronze to dark purple to black in color when ripe. However, many wild

varieties stay green through maturity. Muscadines have skin sufficiently tough that eating the raw fruit often involves biting a small hole in the skin to suck out the pulp inside. They are not only eaten fresh, but also are used in making wine, juice, and jelly. They are rich sources of polyphenols. Important plants for improving wildlife habitat by providing cover, browse, and fruit for a wide variety of animals.

## Carolina Buckthorn

*Indian Cherry or Yellowwood*

**COMMON**



A shrub or small tree with a spreading crown of many slender branched. The leaves are

elliptical, wavy-toothed and covered with rust-colored hairs when young, becoming dark green above, paler and often hairy beneath; turning yellow in autumn. The bark is gray, often with black patches, thin and slightly furrowed. The leaves are aromatic and foul-smelling when crushed.

The fruit is an important food source for birds and other wildlife.

## Trail End

Once you get to the trail end:

- Go straight and follow the *Blue Wing Trail*;
- Go right to follow the dirt road to meet up with the *Whoa Mule Trail* for approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile. This route will meet up again with the *Willis Homestead Trail*. Take it back to the trail head for a total of approximately 7 miles.

*Thank you for visiting!*

