

HABITAT - the arrangement of food, water, cover, and space **-IS THE KEY**. This newsletter is a place to share ideas, information, and help answer some of your habitat and wildlife gardening concerns.

We want to hear from you! Letters, e-mail, photos, drawings. Let us know how successful you are as you create wildlife habitat on your property. Complete the online [Habichat Reader's Survey](#).

Write to Me!

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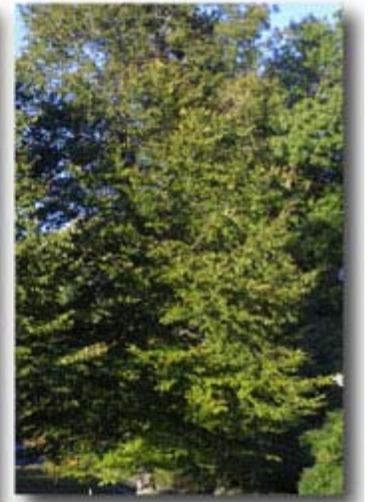
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Native Plant Profile... American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*)

The American Beech is a slow growing tree in the same family as oaks, with one single species native to the U.S. This tree can live to at least 350 years.

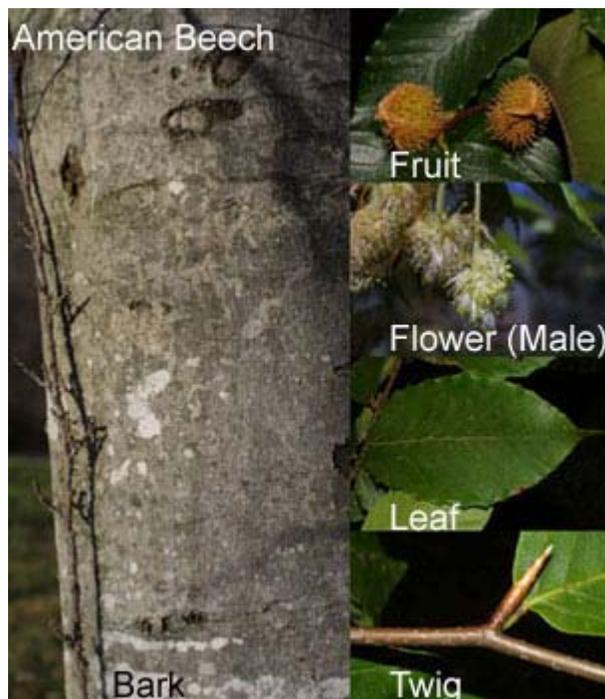
The National Register of Big Trees 2008 lists an American Beech in Anne Arundel County, Maryland as the largest in the United States. When last measured in 1995, it stood 112 feet high and measured 290 inches around.



American Beech leaves are blue-green in summer and gold-copper in the fall.

Height: Average maximum height can reach 60 to 70 feet. This is a tree to place where it has plenty of room to grow. The diameter of this straight growing tree can become 2 to 3 feet, with a canopy spread of 40 feet.

Bark: Smooth gray. People use to carve on the bark. It is said that famous outdoorsman Daniel Boone carved his name on one, though there is controversy among historians on the matter. However, on exhibit at the Filson Historical Society Museum in Louisville, Kentucky is a section of an American beech tree trunk, with the carved legend "D. Boon kilt a bar 1803."



Flowers & Nuts: Ball-like groups of small male and female flowers bloom when leaves have just filled out early April thru May. Wind-pollinated, the triangle-shaped nuts called beechnuts are found in twos covered by a thin burr cover called a catkin. Beechnuts are produced every 2 to 3 years. When there is a nut failure, it affects food sources of many forest animals.

Leaves: Broad, flat, simple and serrated. They are pale green in spring, blue-green in summer and gold-copper in the fall. Leaves remain on trees through winter.

Sun: Can grow well in full sun, but can also tolerate shade. Will do well in north-facing locations.

Soil: Does best on well drained, deep fertile soil.

Cover for Wildlife: Cavities formed in the trees provides shelter for raccoons, opossums, squirrels, and woodpeckers.

All photographs of American Beech, courtesy of Steven J. Baskauf, [Bioimages](#)

Food for Wildlife:

Nuts: Wood Duck, Chickadees, Grosbeak species, Blue Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, Tufted Titmouse, Downy, Hairy, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Black Bears, Red and Gray Fox, Raccoon, all species of Squirrels, Eastern Chipmunk, White footed Mouse

Nuts & Buds: Ruffed Grouse, Pheasants, Purple Finch, and Wild Turkey.

Sap: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Wood: Beaver

Twigs, Foliage, & Nuts: White-tailed Deer

Landscaping Notes: Makes a good ornamental and shade tree. Its rugged sculpture adds interest to a yard design in the winter.



Maryland Wildlife: Wasps Pollinators and Predators

When the word wasp is mentioned, people think of pesky stinging insects, but there is much more to this interesting group of insects found in your Wild Acres. There are over 4,000 wasp species found in the U.S., with most being native.

These insects are in the same order as bees and ants, called Hymenoptera, which means membrane wings. The adults usually have four wings with few or no cross veins. The wings are usually interlocked in-flight, with the rear wings being smaller.

Wasps have mouthparts suitable for chewing, sucking or both. Females usually have a sting or ovipositor. Wasps look like bees not covered in fuzzy hairs. Because of that they are less efficient as pollinators as less pollen stick to their bodies.

Wasps have high energy needs which for many species are met by flower nectar. True wasps have stingers which they use to capture insects or spiders for food for their young in the larvae stage. Wasps are active in the day. Most wasps live only for a year although queen wasps live longer. These insects can be solitary species or social.

The **Eastern Cicada Killer (*Sphecius speciosus*)** is probably the largest wasp you will find. This insect is 2/3" to 3" in length, has a hairy thorax and looks like a hornet. It is a solitary wasp that eats cicadas. By controlling the number of cicadas keeps trees healthy.

The wasp ***Scolia dubia*** feeds the grubs of Japanese beetles to their young. So they help keep your lawn healthy. It has relatives that hunt spiders.

Mud Daubers are dark wasps with long thin waists. They are black and yellow with a metallic look to them. Build a tubular mud nest with many tubes attached to a building or bridge. They place paralyzed spiders in their nests for food for the young.



Yellow jackets are protein eaters. They are common around humans as they are attracted to our food. Their color is red-brown to dark brown with yellow stripes, with slender long legs. They are the wasps that make honey-comb nests often found on buildings. They do pollinate flowers.

Paper wasps (*Poliste ssp.*) also make open comb nests on buildings where ever they can find protection from the rain. Not vicious unless bothered. Does help control the number of insects in an area.

Called a hornet, the **Bald-faced hornet** is a wasp that has a black body with a pale face and white markings on the rest of the body. This is a social insect. They make the large paper nests. Food of the adults is nectar and the adults feed insects to the young. They will feed on flies that are attracted to garbage and pet droppings. Nests are not reused. In the winter birds and squirrels will destroy the nests looking for food. These wasps are commonly found on golden rod in the fall, along with paper wasps. The only true hornet in Maryland is the **European Hornet** which is yellow and chestnut colored. Its prey is yellow jackets.

Long-tailed Ichneumon wasp species are usually about 1 3/4" and have a curled black tail with yellow spots. They are relatively common in the summer on trees infested with horntail insects which can damage trees. Food is the larvae of horntails; related species are being studied and used as biological control of pest insects.

There are times when you need to control wasps and hornets in your area. Wasp traps do not really trap wasp species but do kill useful insects such as honey bees.

Some simple outside clean-up will keep most of the wasp problems away if you:

- Keep garbage covered in a secure area
- Clean up pet food left outside
- Clean up pet droppings
- Clean fallen fruit from fruit trees

There have been numerous wasps introduced to control crop pests. Most of these are solitary in nature and not found in a backyard.

It's important to remember most wasps are not aggressive unless disturbed at the nest, or struck or swatted.

Worldwide, as well as in your Wild Acres, wasps are important pollinators and control pest insect population. Wasps also serve as a food source for mammals such as raccoons and black bears.



When you eat a fig bar or view an orchid, remember that both may have been pollinated by a wasp!



Leaf printing is a fun interactive way to get children from age 3 to high school involved in learning to identify trees. Doing this activity will also help children learn about leaf patterns, veins, shapes and sizes of leaves. And get them outside!



We suggest a couple of ways enjoy these fun activities:



- First collect leaves, from trees or other plants. They may be fresh or fallen.
- Place leaves in a magazine you have taken with you that has two pieces of stiff cardboard placed in it. Place leaves in between the cardboard and place rubber band around magazine.
- For older children write down common name, scientific name, date collected and where found (hillside, riverside) for each leaf.
- Next press leaves between heavy books or a plant press. Should do at least overnight.

Cover the work area where you will be printing with paper.





Leaf Prints

One way to print is using non-toxic ink stamps. You may want to try the multicolor ink pads.

- Place leaf on the pad top side up.
- Then put paper over the leaf, and rub across and press the leaf.
- Remove paper, pick up leaf by stem and place ink side down on paper, then place paper over leaf and rub across with fingers.
- Lift paper, then leaf. Repeat process.

If you use large sheets of craft paper you can have a mural of leaf prints to place on the wall.

Note: Older children and teenagers could ink stamp leaves onto fabric and t-shirts, for a green fashion look. For teen agers and adults, take ink stamps into the field with your journal, place the ink stamp under the leaf on the plant cover with ink and then press into journal.



Leaf Rubbings

You can use crayons or colored pencils.

- Place leaf underside up.
- Cover with writing paper (not drawing paper which is too thick).
- Color using sideways strokes, fast slanting strokes.
- Bright colors show best.

For younger children you might want to use non-toxic finger paints. You can even find finger paint recipes using food coloring, and corn starch or flour on the internet.

Have the children paint the leaf with their fingers and then press the leaf on paper. They could also paint the leaf with a paint brush and non-toxic poster (tempera) paint. Then press on paper.

One other idea is to photocopy leaves using the lightest printing setting. Then have the children color the pictures of the leaves.



Another method, as suggested by the West Virginia DNR, is:

- Cut pieces of cardboard, bigger than leaves.
- Use white glue to glue smooth side of leaf to cardboard.
- Paint leaf.
- Place leaf stamp on paper, press hard.
- Repeat.
- If doing multi-colors, dry before printing the next color.





Fall Tips for your Wild Acres

1. Leave your hummingbird feeder up until the end of October. Many juvenile birds migrate later, so feeders help provide some additional energy after a long flight and prepare hummingbirds for the rest of the trip.
2. Don't dead-head flowers. Leave flowers with their seed heads in the garden to provide that first source of seed for birds such as goldfinches. More details can be found at www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/habichat15.asp#story3
3. Clean your bird feeders. A simple solution of 9 parts water to one part bleach is a good product to clean them with and to reduce the problems of disease at feeders. For more details, see:
 - o www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/wafeeding.asp
 - o www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/habichat2.html#bf
4. Dig up and store in a cool dry location your cannas, gladiolus bulbs and tubers until next planting season. Do this before the first frost in your area.
5. Plant bulbs for spring bloom. Snow-drops, crocus and daffodils provide early pollen and nectar that is needed after a long winter for honey bees. You can plant until heavy frosts start, usually in November.
6. Separate and divide perennials. Fall gives the plants time to reestablish their root system after separating and replanting.
7. Prune dead and diseased branches from trees and shrubs. Our Wild Acres has info on how to do this at www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/waprune.asp
8. Plant a cover crop on your vegetable garden after harvesting the crops. A planting of barley or annual rye is good for erosion control.
9. Plant trees and shrubs in the fall. This time of year gives the plants opportunity to establish their root systems.
10. Take time out to go hawk watching. See our past article about ideas on it at www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/habichat15.asp#story3
11. Test your soil. Check with your local extension service or the University of Maryland Home and Garden Center at www.hgic.umd.edu
12. Sign up for Feeder Watch, a great project that helps scientists understand bird populations in the U.S. www.cornell.edu/pfw
13. Take a garden class! Check with the University of Maryland's Master Gardeners about classes in your area, www.hgic.umd.edu
14. Read some back issues of Habichat online at www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/wildacres.asp
15. Invite your children or grand children to help out.
16. Take a walk outdoors to enjoy Nature!



If you enjoyed this issue of Habichat, you might want to check out our online back issues and clickable listing of Habichat articles.
<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/wildacres.asp#habichat>

Acknowledgements:

- Photograph of American Beech tree in autumn, courtesy of Steven J. Baskauf, [Bioimages](#)
- Photograph of American Beech tree in summer, courtesy of Steven J. Baskauf, [Bioimages](#)
- All photographs in photographic collage of American Beech, courtesy of Steven J. Baskauf, [Bioimages](#)
(on right - top to bottom)
 - American Beech Bark
 - American Beech Flower - Mature Male
 - American Beech Fruit
 - American Beech Leaf
 - American Beech Twig
- Photograph of paper wasp, courtesy of David Cappaert, Michigan State University, www.Bugwood.org
- Photograph of yellow jacket, courtesy of Susan Ellis, www.Bugwood.org
- Photograph of Bald-faced hornet nest inside wood duck nest box, courtesy of Maryland Wood Duck Initiative
- Photograph of Ichneumonid wasp, courtesy of Jim Occi, BugPics, www.Bugwood.org

Here is a listing of phone numbers, web sites and organizations that you might find helpful or interesting in your search for ideas to manage your wild acres. **DNR Online...** Inspired by nature!
www.dnr.maryland.gov

Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. FeederWatchers periodically count the highest numbers of each species they see at their feeders from November through early April. FeederWatch helps scientists track broadscale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance. Project FeederWatch is operated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in partnership with the National Audubon Society, Bird Studies Canada, and Canadian Nature Federation. <http://birds.cornell.edu/pfw>

National Wildlife Federation - Details on their backyard habitat program www.nwf.org or call them at 1-800-822-9919.

Native plants - **The Maryland Native Plant Society** offers information dedicated to protecting, conserving and restoring Maryland's native plants and habitats, visit them at www.mdflora.org.

Maryland Cooperative Extension offers home and garden information, tips publications, plant problems, Bay issues, and other links at www.agnr.umd.edu/MCE/index.cfm Their **Home and Garden Information** number is statewide and can be reached at 1-800-342-2507, and from outside Maryland at 1-410-531-1757.

Bioimages, a project of Vanderbilt University, provides educational information to the public on biologically related topics, as well as a source of biological images for personal and non-commercial use.
<http://bioimages.cas.vanderbilt.edu/>

Maryland's "**Becoming an Outdoors - Woman Program**" - One of the topics covered in the three-day workshops is Backyard Wildlife. For more information on this program contact Patty Allen at 410-260-8537, or send e-mail to: pallen@dnr.state.md.us

For a free wildlife & native plant newsletter, visit the **WindStar Wildlife Institute** at www.windstar.org and subscribe to the WindStar Wildlife Garden Weekly e-newsletter. You can also visit this website to learn how you can become a certified wildlife habitat naturalist.

For more information on butterflies - visit the **North American Butterfly Association** at www.naba.org

Warm season grasses and wild meadows for upland nesting birds visit **Pheasants Forever** at www.pheasantsforever.org or e-mail: pf@pheasantsforever.org

In an effort to continue to provide quality backyard habitat information we are asking our readers to tell us what you think. Please take a few minutes to answer our survey. This will help us to improve our site so we can continue to deliver the information you want.

[Habichat Reader's Survey](#)

Habichat, the newsletter for Maryland's Stewards of Backyard Wildlife, is published by the Wildlife and Heritage Service, Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

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