

Campus Tree Trail

The University of Leeds campus is home to over 1,400 amazing trees!

Our self-guided tree trail will take you to visit eleven of the most inspiring trees on campus and explain some of the facts that make them so special.

A more in-depth web version and a plain-text version of this guide, as well a link to directions via Google Maps™, are available at leaf.leeds.ac.uk/campus-tree-trail.

This 2.1 km trail can typically be walked in **45-60 minutes**, however you may wish to complete the trail in two sessions if time is limited. In these cases, we suggest treating the trail as two smaller circuits, each starting from and returning back to the Leeds University Union building.

We hope you enjoy the trees!

The Campus Tree Trail

Directions for the trail can be found using Google Maps at <https://goo.gl/maps/bqnUXqtYuX45CVeJ7>

1. Our tree trail starts at the back of the University Union building at a carved wooden sculpture. This was once an ash tree but was transformed into art when it died. Keeping dead wood in place also provides habitat for nesting birds and mammals, as well as for wood-boring insects.
2. Our next stop is a black walnut tree outside the Esther Simpson building. During the building's design process, the university worked to keep this tree and to make it a feature of the space. Bat roosting boxes and a bee hotel were added to support wildlife.
3. At the top of Mt. Preston St. is our widest tree trunk on campus. This sycamore tree holds five tonnes of carbon! To make that much CO₂ you would need to boil 330,000 cups of tea, or 845,000 if you don't take milk!
4. The London plane in Chancellor's Court is a star tree for flood prevention! Urban areas risk flooding because bricks and concrete make it hard for water to enter the ground. Each year, this tree's leaves and branches stop 2,300 litres of rain before they reach the ground and can flow to rivers and puddles!
5. As you emerge from the passage that cuts through the E.C Stoner Building, dawn redwood trees tower high above you. It's hard to believe that less than a hundred years ago we believed them to be extinct! Fossils of dawn redwoods had been found dating back 100 million years to the Mesozoic Era but it wasn't until 1941 that a living example of the tree was discovered in China. Seeds were sent all over the world and we were able to plant some on campus! Dawn redwoods are one of just three redwood species in the world. The giant redwoods live in North America and are the tallest species of tree in the world (up to 126m tall!). We have a few growing on the same road (about 80 metres along the road where it slopes downwards, the trees are on the left of the road at the end of a terraced building). How many differences can you spot between the two species?
6. This variety of Japanese maple is an ornamental tree, prized for its unusual, stripy, greenish bark. Unlike many trees along this trail, it will only grow to around 10m tall and so won't capture a huge quantity of carbon in its lifetime. Sometimes though, it is important to simply enjoy the beauty of trees.

7. Opposite the front of the University Union building is a green space, shaded by common lime trees. Unlike the citrus fruits, these trees are native to the UK and support wildlife on campus, especially pollinators like bees! Trees in social spaces provide shade on sunny days and shelter on rainy ones, making the campus a much nicer place to be.

8. European ash trees, like this one on Lifton Place, account for 8% of all trees on campus, storing 61 tonnes of carbon! Sadly however, ash trees in the UK are at high risk from diseases and pests. While we try to protect these trees, it is important that we consider which species might be most resilient to harm in the future when we plant new trees on campus.

9. Although we try to not to cut back our big campus trees, sometimes a cut is necessary to keep them healthy and to make sure the people and buildings around them are safe. This sycamore was heavily pruned (you can still see where the big branches were cut away) but look at how much new growth there has been! Trees can recover from a lot of disturbance if managed with care and understanding.

10. Like many of our largest trees on campus, the biggest beech tree can be found in St. George's Field. As well as holding 2.6 tonnes of carbon, this beech is great at cleaning the air on campus. Every year it scrubs almost a kilogram of pollution from the air, which could otherwise lead to lung disease and production of acid rain.

11. The white willow of St. George's Field is our final stop on the trail. Until recently, it held over five tonnes of carbon, but damage from high winds has caused it to lose some big branches. Old and damaged trees are vital habitat for lots of campus wildlife!

Thank you for joining our tree trail! Once you have visited all our star trees, why not keep exploring?

There are many more amazing trees on campus and Saint George's Field (where our trail ends) has lots of inspiring trees we weren't able to include in this trail. It's also a great place to relax, spot some wildlife, and generally enjoy the nature on campus!

All our campus trees are identified on the i-Tree map and you can even find information about their size and the carbon they store at leaf.leeds.ac.uk/projects/i-tree

i-Tree Leeds

This tree trail was made possible through the i-Tree Leeds project. During the summers of 2017 and 2018, staff and student volunteers measured and identified every tree on the university campus. This allowed us to calculate that our 1,400 trees on campus store over 500 tonnes of carbon!

It's now possible to find information for each campus tree via the online map at leaf.leeds.ac.uk/projects/i-tree. Through the map legend, you can explore our 130 tree species, the size of individual trees, the carbon they store, and the pollution each tree is able to remove.

Understanding the value that each tree brings can help us to protect them, as well as to plant more trees in the future.

As groups in the UK and around the world look for ways to capture carbon from the atmosphere and reduce climate change, the role of urban trees is gaining attention. The trees in our cities are part of everyday life and often go unnoticed but the help they give us is vital. Forests are hugely important providers of carbon storage, flood prevention, and wildlife habitats, but urban green spaces also have a role to play. By understanding these roles, we are able to prioritise urban trees on campus and through the advice we provide to other land-managing organisations.

To stay up to date with the latest tree news and events from the University of Leeds and our collaborators at the United Bank of Carbon, please follow us on Twitter and Instagram @Leeds_LEAF & @UBoCarbon