

Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum Tree Identification and Uses of Trees by Native Americans

Tree common name	Tree characteristics	Tree uses by Native Americans
Ash	<p><u>Bark</u> Intersecting ridges form diamond-shaped furrows</p> <p><u>Leaf</u> Opposite, compound, pinnate</p> <p><u>Flower/fruit/seed</u> Clusters of flowers in early spring ripen to 1-seeded wing samara</p>	<p><u>Medicinal</u> Steeped buds, leaves, seeds, twigs, and bark for skin washes and antiseptic wound dressings</p> <p>Inner bark applied as poultice to sores and for hemorrhoids</p> <p>Tea made from outer bark as “thinning” beverage and diuretic and taken as tonic after childbirth to relieve cramps and for cleansing effect on internal organs as well as to treat and protect against smallpox</p> <p>Seeds used as aphrodisiac for men and women as well as animals</p> <p><u>Other</u> Bark used for splint basketry, tools, bowls, lacrosse sticks, and snowshoes</p>
Cherry	<p><u>Bark</u> Smooth bark with lenticels breaks into irregularly shaped scales</p> <p><u>Leaf</u> Alternate, simple, oblong toothed</p> <p><u>Flower/fruit/seed</u> White flowers along a slender stem in Spring</p> <p>Fruits ripen in summer</p>	<p><u>Food</u> Fruit tree</p> <p><u>Medicinal</u> Bark, containing hydrocyanic acid, steeped into various teas and decoctions used for cough medicine, lozenges, diarrhea, and toothpastes</p> <p>Steeped ripe berries to make “bitter tonic” to aid digestion and relieve cramps</p> <p><u>Other</u> Cherry stones used in rattles for healing rituals</p>
Crabapple	<p><u>Leaf</u> Alternate, simple</p>	<p><u>Food</u> Fruit tree</p>
Dogwood	<p><u>Leaf</u> Opposite, simple</p>	<p><u>Food</u> Fruit tree</p>
Elm	<p><u>Bark</u> Ash to reddish gray, somewhat spongy with loosely defined vertical strips, strips separate from one side and may become rougher</p> <p><u>Leaf</u> Alternate, simple</p>	<p><u>Medicinal</u> Sore throat and fever remedy and to quench thirst</p> <p><u>Food</u> Inner bark ground into flour</p> <p><u>Other</u> Twisted fibers into laces</p>
Hawthorn	<p><u>Leaf</u> Alternate, simple</p>	<p><u>Food</u> Fruit tree</p>
Hickory	<p><u>Bark</u></p>	<p><u>Food</u></p>

	<p>Tight, flat-topped intersecting vertical strips gives appearance of woven basket</p> <p><u>Leaf</u> Alternate, compound, pinnate</p> <p><u>Flower/fruit/seed</u> Male catkins in early fall release pollen to be caught by female flowers</p> <p>Single nut enclosed in green husk which splits into quarters</p>	<p>Nut tree</p> <p>Sugared sap flow at end of winter</p> <p><u>Medicinal</u> Bark tea was cold remedy, diuretic, and laxative</p> <p>Chewed inner bark to treat mouth sores</p> <p>Bark poultices to relieve headache, stop bleeding, and for wounds</p> <p>Green leaves and unripe green nuts used in medicinal herbal preparations to treat boils, ringworm, and other external skin eruptions and tinctured for internal limited use</p> <p>Vapors from hickory shoots on hot stones to treat convulsions</p> <p>Nut oil used as insect repellent and for hair treatments</p> <p><u>Other</u> Bark used in tanning leather and creating shades of yellow dye</p> <p>Wood used for bows and arrows and war clubs</p>
<p>Honey Locust</p>	<p><u>Leaf</u> Alternate, compound, pinnate</p> <p><u>Flower/fruit/seed</u> Seed pods</p>	<p><u>Food</u> Fleshy, inner seed pod of these species was scraped and used as a sweetener</p>
<p>Juniper (Redcedar)</p>	<p><u>Bark</u> Gray to reddish brown fibrous strips peel away from trunk, oriented in tight spiral, trunk often not cylindrical</p> <p><u>Leaf</u> Needle-like scaly leaf evergreen</p> <p><u>Flower/fruit/seed</u> Female flowers produce a dark blue berry-like cone that matures to contain 1-3 seeds</p>	<p><u>Food</u> Berries eaten with game meats as seasoning</p> <p><u>Medicinal</u> Astringent and anti-septic bark and berries as a poultice on wounds and skin problems</p> <p>Berries used internally for coughs, colds, and digestive problems</p> <p>Dried greens burned and inhaled to relieve headache and rheumatism, clean away parasites</p> <p><u>Other</u> Dried greens burned and inhaled to purify thoughts before healing ceremony or for sweat lodge rites</p>

		<p>Dense branching clusters used to clean out dwellings and sweep ceremonial areas and sweat lodges</p> <p>Inner bark for dyes ranging from red to mahogany for weaving mats, bags, and other objects</p>
Maple	<p><u>Bark</u> Bark between cracks may break horizontally into irregular sections</p> <p><u>Leaf</u> Opposite, simple, palmately veined</p> <p><u>Flower/fruit/seed</u> Clusters of tiny flowers bloom in early spring to become winged “key” fruit</p>	<p><u>Food</u> Tapping, sapping, and “sugaring off” of maple syrup</p> <p>Bark dried in fire, pounded, and used to make bread</p> <p><u>Other</u> Religious festival called Maple Dance</p>
Mulberry	<p><u>Leaf</u> Alternate, simple</p>	<p><u>Food</u> Fruit tree</p>
Oak	<p><u>Bark</u> Smooth with narrow vertical cracks with round lenticels, cracks develop furrows that separate ridges, and ridges may become divided horizontally to form irregular blocks</p> <p><u>Leaf</u> Opposite, simple, lobes and sinuses</p> <p><u>Flower/fruit/seed</u> Male flowers emerge along drooping catkins in early spring, female flowers project from spikes along terminal twigs</p> <p>Windborne pollination produces nuts</p>	<p><u>Food</u> After cracked and leached of tannins, acorns pounded or ground into meal and flour used in bread, soups, and meat substitutes (acorn burgers)</p> <p>Inner bark processed into nutrient rich foods</p> <p><u>Medicinal</u> Tannins in bark teas, lotions, tinctures, and dressings treated sore throats, cough, colds, colic, rheumatism, and diarrhea</p> <p>Tannins dried and healed skin sores</p> <p><u>Other</u> Tannins used for leather and dyes</p>
Pine	<p><u>Bark</u> Smooth gray to green with light colored dash-like lenticels, breaks into irregularly shaped scales, and develops horizontal cracks</p> <p><u>Leaf</u> Evergreen needles</p> <p><u>Flower/fruit/seed</u> Pinecone/seeds</p>	<p><u>Food</u> Boiled cones and young buds steamed with meat</p> <p>Seeds used to flavor cooking</p> <p>Inner bark ground into flour</p> <p><u>Medicinal</u> Bark boiled in infusions and steam for coughs, colds, respiratory problems, and rheumatism</p> <p>Inner bark and needle infusions for washing hair, wound dressing, and skin problems</p> <p>Rotted wood pulverized into talcum powder for baby skin rash and umbilical cord scar at birth</p>

		<p>Bark scrapings of knots on trunk to drink and apply topically treated poison ivy</p> <p>Pine sap and bees wax used for skin treatments</p> <p>Resin was healing salve for chest colds</p> <p>Needles burned in spring and fall for prevention of illness</p> <p>Small branch hung on wall and known as ghost medicine</p> <p><u>Other</u> Resin used to waterproof canoes</p> <p>“Tree of Peace” in treaties among Native Americans</p>
Serviceberry	<p><u>Bark</u> Smooth light gray with dark vertical lines, develop into long vertical cracks</p> <p><u>Leaf</u> Alternate, simple</p>	<p><u>Food</u> Fruit tree</p>
Spruce	<p><u>Bark</u> Stiff, irregular, roundish, scales</p> <p><u>Leaf</u> Evergreen needle that grows from a peg that remains on the twig when the needle falls</p> <p><u>Flower/fruit/seed</u> Spruce cones</p>	<p><u>Food</u> Spruce beer from spruce tips and young branches</p> <p><u>Medicinal</u> Bark infusions used to treat wounds and for skin and hair care</p> <p>Spruce gum from greens and inner bark used for cold and cough remedies</p> <p><u>Other</u> Associated spruce trees with blood, soul, and living presence of ancestors</p> <p>Roots split for sewing bark buckets, canoes, and snowshoes</p>
Willow	<p><u>Bark</u> Loose, scaly, vertical strips or ridges that may intersect and break apart easily and becomes cracked and broken looking</p> <p><u>Leaf</u> Alternate, simple</p>	<p><u>Medicinal</u> Bark infusions used for pain conditions and fever</p>

Sources:

1. Abrams, M. D., & Nowacki, G. J. (2008). Native Americans as active and passive promoters of mast and fruit trees in the eastern USA. *The Holocene*, 18(7), 1123–1137.
2. Kavasch, E. Barrie. *Earth wise: American Indian traditional uses of native northeast trees*. Washington, CT, Institute for American Indian Studies, 2000.
3. Wojtech, Michael. *Bark: A field guide to trees of the northeast*. Waltham, MA, Brandeis University Press, 2000.