



Abbey Park Spring Blossom Tree Trail – Leicester Tree Wardens & Choose How You Move.



This 1.2-mile self-guided route around Abbey Park can be enjoyed at any time of the year. The walk includes part of the Abbey Park Tree Trail and is a self-guided version of the Choose How You Move guided walk in April, led by the Leicester Tree Wardens.

We have included What3words locations for each tree and the approximate locations are shown on the map located on the Community Orchards website page and below.

The walk does include four uneven steps but can also be completed on the flat.

The Leicester Tree Warden members put the walk and talk together in partnership with Choose How You Move and we wish to thank all the volunteers who contributed.





1. Elm (w3w – fits.itself.topic)

The Elm is a native species. Most examples were wiped out due to Dutch Elm disease, which attacked them in the 1960s. Most of the remaining native elms grow to the height of a small tree before they are again infected and killed. There are a few large English Elms left in some of the city parks.

These elms are a variety called New Horizon, which is resistant to Dutch Elm disease. This is a hybrid of a Siberian and Japanese Elm. New Horizon has green flowers (other Elms have red or purple flowers). They emerge before the leaves from February to April and are pollinated by wind. The flowers are followed by the seeds, which are round discs.

Elms are propagated by seeds and by suckering.

Please now turn towards the perimeter wall on your right and to a set of steps leading down to the River Soar. These steps are uneven, so please take care and use the handrail for added safety. You can also access the next tree by returning to the café and turning left to walk along the River Soar cycleway until you reach the steps.

2. Apple tree – directly opposite the steps by the River Soar, there is an old Apple tree, which has delicate flowers in the spring. Please now turn right and walk towards the café bridge.



3.Cherry (w3w – rental.impact.feeds)

This is an example of a Japanese flowering cherry and there are many others in the park. There are many different forms of flowering cherry which originate in Japan and they usually have white or pink double flowers. They are grown for their flowers rather than fruit and any fruit are not worth eating.

In the UK, they flower in March or April. The cherry blossom and tree are known as Sakura in Japan and are their national flower. The Japanese have a custom of holding feasts under the trees when they flower, called Hanami. The Japanese Meteorological agency track peak blossoming of the cherry as it moves north in spring.



4. Foxglove Tree (w3w – best.poetic.axed)

This tree is also known as the Princess or Empress tree. It has trumpet shaped flowers in late spring which are pale purple. It has large heart shaped leaves, and the flowers are followed by round fruit (not edible). It originates from Northern China and originally only the empress would have one growing on her grave.

This tree is fast growing and planted in parks and gardens. It is beginning to self-seed in Europe, tolerant of pollution and has been suggested as a tree to be used for carbon capture.



Please now turn left, cross over the bridge and the next tree is directly in front of the end of the bridge on the other side.

5. Red Horse Chestnut (w3w – code.relate.being)

This is a hybrid of the common Horse Chestnut and American Red Buckeye. It is easy to identify from its red, pink flowers. It is more upright in growth, having leaves and seeds which are also different from the common horse chestnut. The conkers are almost free of spines, flowers in mid to late spring and it is a smaller tree than horse chestnut.





6. Beech (w3w – escape.count.minds)

The Beech is a Southern and Western European native tree which takes its name from the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic words for a book. This is due to Northern Europe early manuscripts, which were written on thin tablets of beech wood and bound in beech boards. It is native to south and middle England but naturalised throughout Britain.

Beech woods are particularly common in the Cotswolds and Chilterns and the Beech trees around High Wycombe were used for the furniture trade in the past.

The flowers are yellow green catkins, which appear in Spring. They are shaped like the fruit and are wind pollinated. The leaves often stay on the tree in winter, which is ideal for hedging.

7. Caucasian Wingnut (w3w – rise.slams.bits)

This tree is native to the Caucasus and Northern Iran. It was introduced in Great Britain in the 1800's and is often planted in parks, being considered almost vandal proof. In unmown areas it will be surrounded by suckers. It is in the same family as the Walnut and is a fast growing tree.

The female flowers are catkins can grow up to 50 cm long, are visible throughout the summer and are then strung with green nuts with 1 cm wings. The bark is grey, brown with many coarse criss-crossing ridges.



8. Amelanchier (w3w – riots.worker.stroke)

This tree is in the same family as Pears and has many other names including Serviceberry and Juneberry. It originates in North America where there are many species, although there are also 3 native species in Asia and Europe.

These many different species also easily hybridise with each other. The flowers are usually white with long starry petals which grow in small heads.

The fruit ripens in mid-summer as small berries up to 9mm wide. They are initially red and then purple black by midsummer when they are soon eaten by birds. In North America some varieties of Amelanchier are harvested commercially. One of these is the Saskatoon, which gave its name to the Canadian City.



9. Alder (w3w – policy.open.test)

This is a native tree usually found growing in damp soil often close to rivers and lakes. When its roots are submerged in water for long periods of time it creates its own oxygen supply. The timber is water durable and used for boats and the timber piles on which Venice is built. The leaves are shaped like a racquet. In the UK, they are more widespread in the wetter areas of the West and North.

It has male and female catkins. The male catkin is greenish yellow and grows up to 4 inches long. The female is upright, red and oval shaped. After being fertilised, it ripens into a small brown cone. The seeds drop from the female catkin and float downstream and then may find a new place to root. In Derbyshire, the seeds are used in well dressings.

Some trees have been killed by a water borne root pathogen or phytophthora since 1993.

10. Weeping Willow (w3w – august.tribune.span)

This is a weeping willow, but it can be difficult to differentiate between willow species. There is also a golden weeping willow. It is native to China and was traded along the silk road to southwestern Asia, arriving in Europe around the end of the 17th century and thriving along the edges of rivers and lakes. The male and female flowers are carried on separate trees. The male flowers are yellow green and appear with young leaves as catkins from April to June and they are pollinated by insects.



11. Crab Apple. (w3w – loves.driver.puff)

A stunningly beautiful tree in Spring, see the image below but you could easily pass it by during other seasons.

Crab apples are often planted as street trees and in gardens and they produce lots of small, usually sour fruit which are eaten by birds. The fruit can be used in cooking and for making jam.



12.Hornbeam (w3w – appear.waddle.become)

This tree is native to Southern Britain and eastwards to Asia. It is in the same family as beech and has dangling yellow catkins from April to May, which are pollinated by the wind.

The hornbeam has the hardest wood of any tree in Europe and was used for products like cogs and screws, skittles, and skittle balls. Now it is used for billiard cues and drumsticks.

It can be confused with Beech, but the leaves are serrated and have green bracts (and later seed heads also distinguish them).



13.Oak (w3w – whites.chained.joined)

The Oak is a native UK species, which supports more life than any other UK species.

This oak was planted in 1882 by the Princess of Wales when the park was opened. There is more information on the nearby heritage panel.

These trees can live for over 1000 years. Most of the ancient oaks in Europe can be found in the UK.

The oak has small green and yellow catkins from April to May and is pollinated by wind. It is a very valuable tree. In the past, oak was used to make the timber frames of houses and also roof and ship timbers. Acorns are borne later in the year and in the past were used to feed animals. They are eaten by many wild animals and birds such as Jays and it is those nuts which are stored and then forgotten which often grow into new trees.





14.Apple (w3w – clues.oldest.noses)

Apples were originally cultivated in the Tien-Shen mountains on the border between China and Kazakhstan, where originally, they fed bears. The tree gradually spread to Europe along the silk road. There are thousands of different varieties that are all grown for their fruit.

These trees on this community orchard are all around 6 years old and are being tended by the Leicester Tree Wardens.

Apple trees produce ripe fruit in late summer too autumn. These trees have just started to fruit. Any apples and other fruit in local parks can be picked by residents for their own use. Many birds and mammals will also eat apples.

All apples are pollinated by insects including bees, wasps, hoverflies and beetles.



15.Silver Birch (w3w – truck.trial.pool)

These trees are native to Britain, Europe and Northern Asia. They are known as the Queen of the Forest. They are usually found in the wild in a woodland rather than in hedgerows. It is a hardy tree and can withstand intense cold and drought.

The bark on older trees is rough and dark covered with black arrows and diamonds. The trees have yellow brown catkins, 1 to 2 inches long in April to May. Birch trees are wind pollinated, produce more tree pollen than other trees and are often responsible for hay fever. It seeds prolifically and is a pioneer species. The tiny seeds find a foothold that other seeds cannot penetrate and given the right conditions, they will germinate and grow quickly. This means that birch often move into areas of woods following a fire or after clearance.

It is particularly favoured by the great tit, blue tit, coal tit and long-tailed tits.

16.Horse Chestnut (w3w – transit.frock.extra)

They live up to 300 years, produce conkers in autumn, have sticky buds in spring and flowers in May. It was introduced to the UK from Turkey in the late 16th century and is now naturalised.

It has been a popular tree in towns and parks since mid-Victorian times and is admired for its sticky buds, its large leaves, as well as its conkers. Conkers is a game played by children, using the fruit, which are baked in the oven to make the shell tough.



The flowers are the showiest of any of the tall trees. The whitish flowers clusters can be up to 10 inches long. The base of each flower is initially yellow, turning red after pollination. It is a good source of nectar and pollen.



On behalf of everyone who contributed to the creation of this trail, we hope you enjoyed your walk around Abbey Park. For further information, please see the links below.

Abbey Park Tree Trail – [Abbey Park tree trail \(leicester.gov.uk\)](http://leicester.gov.uk)

Edible Leicester - [Community orchards \(leicester.gov.uk\)](http://leicester.gov.uk)

Upcoming guided walks throughout the City of Leicester - [Events < Choose How You Move](#)

Become a member of the Leicester Tree Wardens - [Tree Warden Volunteer | Leicester City Council Volunteering](#)