

# Trees in winter

Identifying Trees at Willowbrook Park in the Winter



NYC Parks

**GREENBELT**  
CONSERVANCY

Have you ever wondered how you can tell one tree from the next without their leaves? There are a few clues that makes each tree stand apart from the other species. Here we will talk about a few common trees that live in Willowbrook Park in the Greenbelt.

To identify a tree we will be looking at;

1. Buds and branches – Are they alternate or opposite placed?
2. Bark Patterns
3. Seeds ( if any are still around)

That's it! Come on and take a look with me.



**GREENBELT**  
**CONSERVANCY**

The first clue we can look at is if the tree has alternate or opposite branches or buds.

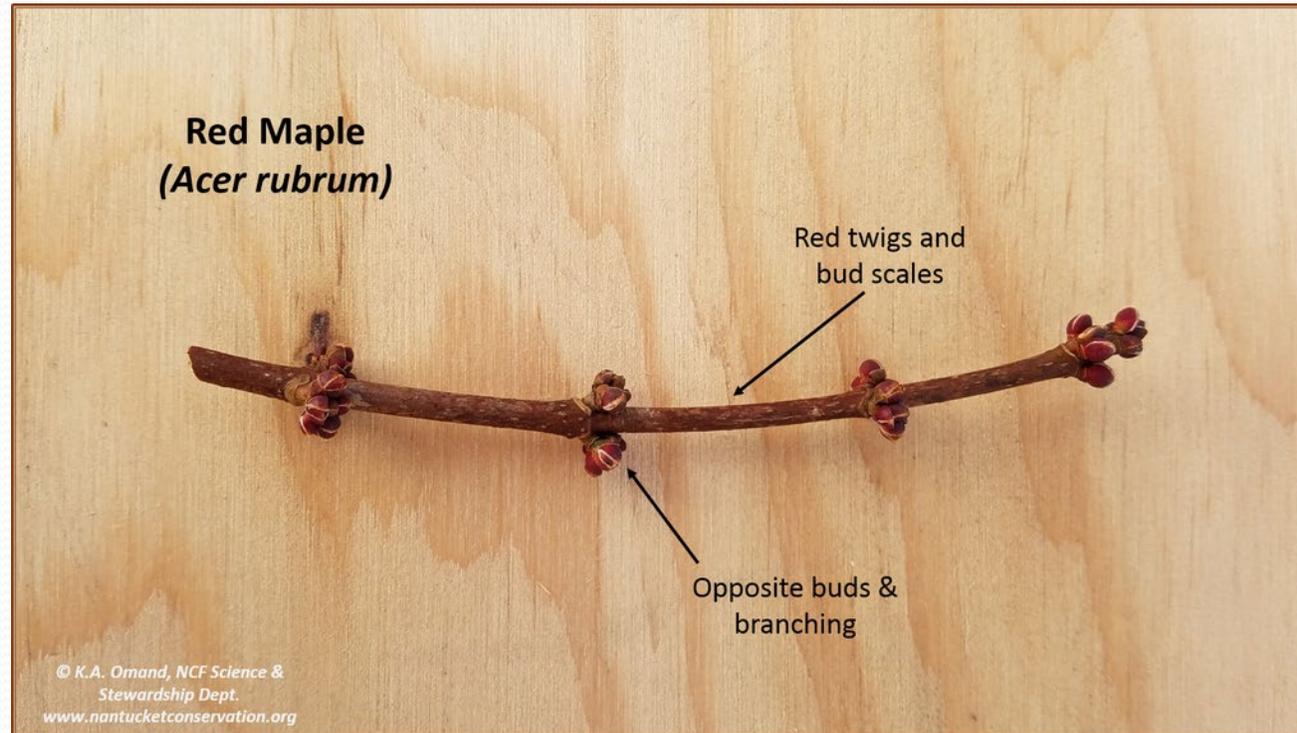


The twig on the left has opposite leaf buds, they are side by side. The twig on the right has alternate leaf buds, they occur separate on each side.



NYC Parks

GREENBELT  
CONSERVANCY



First tree we will look at will be the Red Maple. Clue one: look at the branch for alternate or opposite buds and branches. Here you can see they are opposite. Only a few trees are opposite, Maple, Ash, Dogwood and Horse chestnut.



GREENBELT  
CONSERVANCY



Then lets look at the bark. Maple trees have smooth gray bark when young, when mature it has fissures.



The Sweetgum tree is no surprise to Willowbrook's wet forest, this tree loves to get its roots wet! It is a colorful tree in Autumn, displaying its leaves from yellow to purple. It gets its name from the Native Americans who chewed its resin like gum.



First we determine the twig to be alternate. The terminal or end bud is like its own fingerprint. The Sweetgum's bud is cone shaped. Each different species of tree has its own distinct bud.



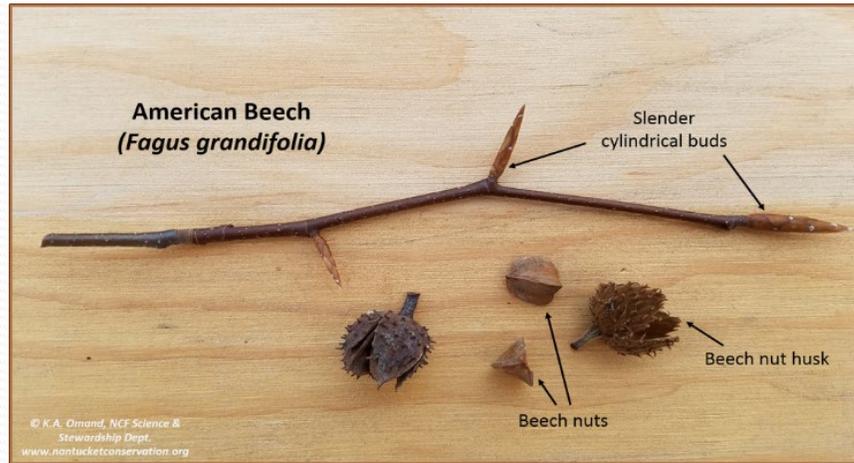
Young Sweetgum trees sometimes appear to have crusty bark and “winged” protrusions on its trunk and branches. Years ago, pieces of the tree were sold in Florida as souvenirs as “Alligator wood.” As the Sweetgum matures this phenomenon disappears.



The most telltale clue of this tree, would be the numerous Sweetgum seed balls that fall to the ground surrounding its roots. These seed balls are winter habitats for insect larvae, and the seeds are eaten by the resident winter birds.



The American Beech tree is known for its smooth gray bark. It is a magnificent tree to behold anytime of the year. The terminal buds are sharp and pointy and alternate. When the trees mature they have their own distinctive bumps and twists on their trunk. In winter the beech holds onto its golden to copper leaves. The three-sided seeds which are high in fat are quickly eaten by animals in fall.



The Bald Cypress is a deciduous tree of grand stature. It is a southern tree that grows in wet areas. It has feathery fern-like branches of green needles that turn brown and fall off in Autumn. It also bears small round cones characteristic of evergreens. These cones are eaten by the squirrels and waterfowl that live in the park. The most obvious clue of the Bald Cypress are the “knees” which are raised parts of the tree roots that look like silhouettes of people.



NYC Parks

**GREENBELT  
CONSERVANCY**

Now grab your boots and  
go for a hike! Enjoy!



GREENBELT  
CONSERVANCY

