

A stylized graphic of the American flag, featuring a blue field with white stars and red and white stripes, positioned on the left side of the image.

HORTICULTURE AND THE GROUNDS AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

A small red five-pointed star located above the title text.A small red five-pointed star located below the title text.

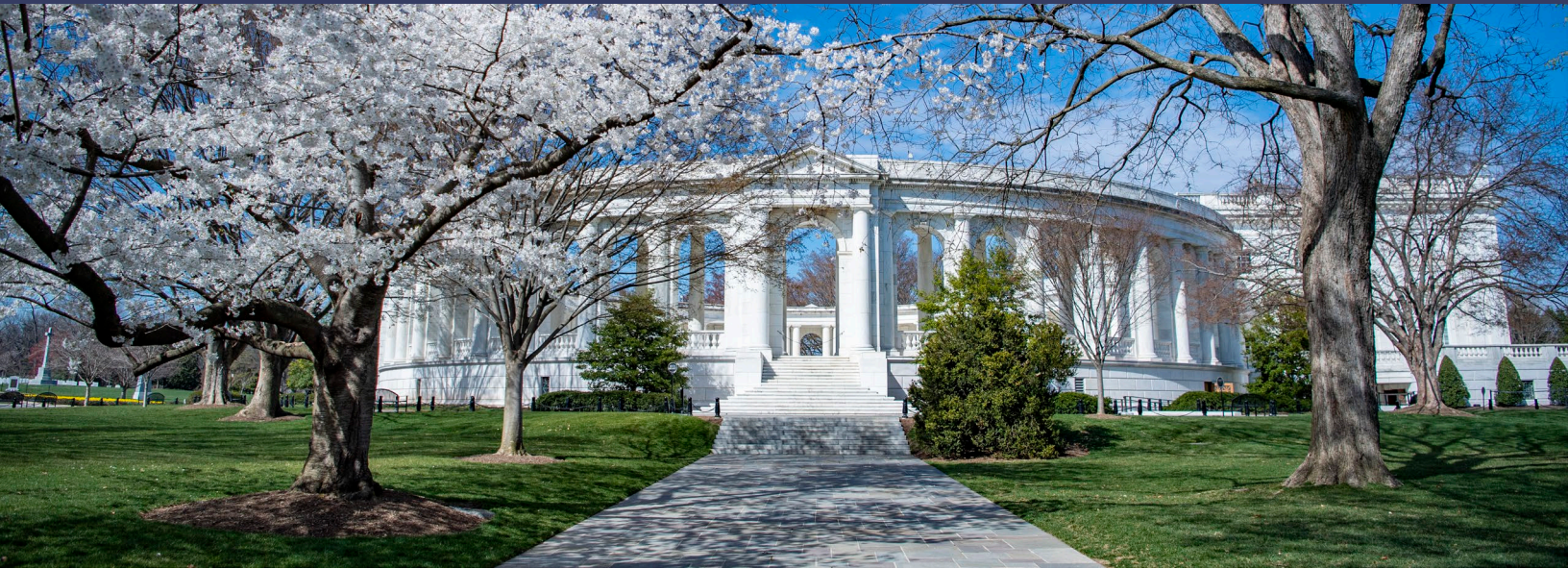


Overlooking Section 7 of Arlington National Cemetery. (Arlington National Cemetery/ Elizabeth Fraser, 2020)

How large is Arlington National Cemetery?

The cemetery encompasses over 600 acres of formal and informal landscapes and contains approximately 400,000 graves. Throughout the grounds there are more than 8,600 trees, including native and exotic species.





Trees blooming near the Memorial Amphitheater. (Arlington National Cemetery/Elizabeth Fraser, 2020)

What is a Level III Arboretum?

An arboretum is a collection of trees and shrubs that are cultivated for scientific or display purposes — in other words, a “tree museum.” To commemorate Arlington National Cemetery’s 150th anniversary in 2014, ANC established the Memorial Arboretum.

The Morton Arboretum of Lisle, Illinois accredits arboreta around the world through the ArbNet accreditation program. In 2015, ANC achieved the second of four levels of accreditation by meeting several professional criteria. These included developing an arboretum plan and collections policy, demonstrating the use of an established plant records system, labeling a certain number of trees throughout the property and offering educational programs focused on trees.

In 2018, ANC advanced to Level III arboretum status by demonstrating that it maintains a collection of 500 species of woody plants, presents substantial educational programming, collaborates with other arboreta and participates in tree science and conservation.





A sign marks Medal of Honor Tree No. 13, an American sycamore. (Arlington National Cemetery/Elizabeth Fraser, 2017)

Why are some of the trees labeled?

There are nearly 300 trees labeled within the cemetery. Tree labels include the scientific name, common name, family name and native range of the tree. Labeled trees include state champions, the Medal of Honor historic trees and other noteworthy trees, as well as specimens along highly trafficked routes. The 36 Medal of Honor trees are descended from historic trees, and identification numbers on the labels correspond to a website identification number that identifies the tree's origins.





Visitors to Arlington National Cemetery view a Memorial Tree. (Arlington National Cemetery/Elizabeth Fraser, 2019)

What is a Memorial Tree?

ANC's 143 Memorial Trees are living memorials that commemorate military battles, units, veterans, families and others who served. A list of Memorial Trees can be found on the ANC website, with information about the species, location, to whom or what they are dedicated and the date of dedication:

<https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Memorial-Arboretum-and-Horticulture/Trees/Memorial-Trees>





The Virginia state champion empress tree in Section 46 (Arlington National Cemetery/Melissa Bohan, 2013) and the Virginia state and national co-champion dwarf hackberry tree in Section 8. (Arlington National Cemetery/Elizabeth Fraser, 2018)

How many state champion trees does Arlington have?

Trees that compete for the title of state champion are measured and scored according to tree height, crown spread and trunk circumference. Co-champions are designated when two trees score within five points of each other.

ANC is currently home to five Virginia champion or co-champion trees – the national and state co-champion dwarf hackberry, state champion royal paulownia yellowwood, state champion sawtooth oak, state champion empress tree and state co-champion pin oak.

The dwarf hackberry in Section 8 of the cemetery is the newest awardee, designated as a state and national co-champion in 2018. Dwarf hackberries are small trees that typically grow three to 12 feet in height but can reach over 30 feet. The stiff twigs and smooth grey bark become ridged and knotted as the plant ages.

The locations and measurements of the state champion trees at ANC can be found here: <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Memorial-Arboretum-and-Horticulture/Trees/State-Champion-Trees>





Milkweed blooming in Arlington National Cemetery. (Arlington National Cemetery/Kelly Wilson, 2015)

What native plants does ANC have?

Examples of native plants at ANC include oaks, basswood, river birches and milkweed plants.

Native plants provide important habitats for local wildlife. Caterpillars feed on majestic native oaks, and in turn, many species of birds rely on those caterpillars as sources of food for their young. Squirrels and chipmunks eat basswood seeds. The peeling bark of river birches provides hiding places for insects and, consequently, food for woodpeckers. Milkweed plants, growing among the river birch beds on Custis Walk, provide food for monarch butterfly larvae as well as nectar for moths, hummingbirds and other butterflies.





A cherry tree blooming in front of Section 60. (Arlington National Cemetery/Elizabeth Fraser, 2020)

Washington, D.C. is famous for its cherry trees. Are there any cherry trees at ANC?

Every spring, about 400 cherry trees bloom at Arlington National Cemetery. The arboretum collection includes about 20 species or variety of cherry trees.

The “Okami” variety of cherry tree blooms the earliest, sometimes in late February. It serves as a harbinger of spring.

Yoshino, the same variety found at the Tidal Basin, is the most common cherry tree at ANC and can be found surrounding the Confederate Memorial and in Section 37.

Autumnalis blooms in both the spring and the fall. A small grove can be found in Section 45, within sight of the Kennedy gravesites, and along Crook’s Walk.

Forty-eight native black cherry trees are scattered throughout the cemetery. While the flowers are less conspicuous than those of other cherry trees, they provide food for cecropia moths and tiger swallowtails.





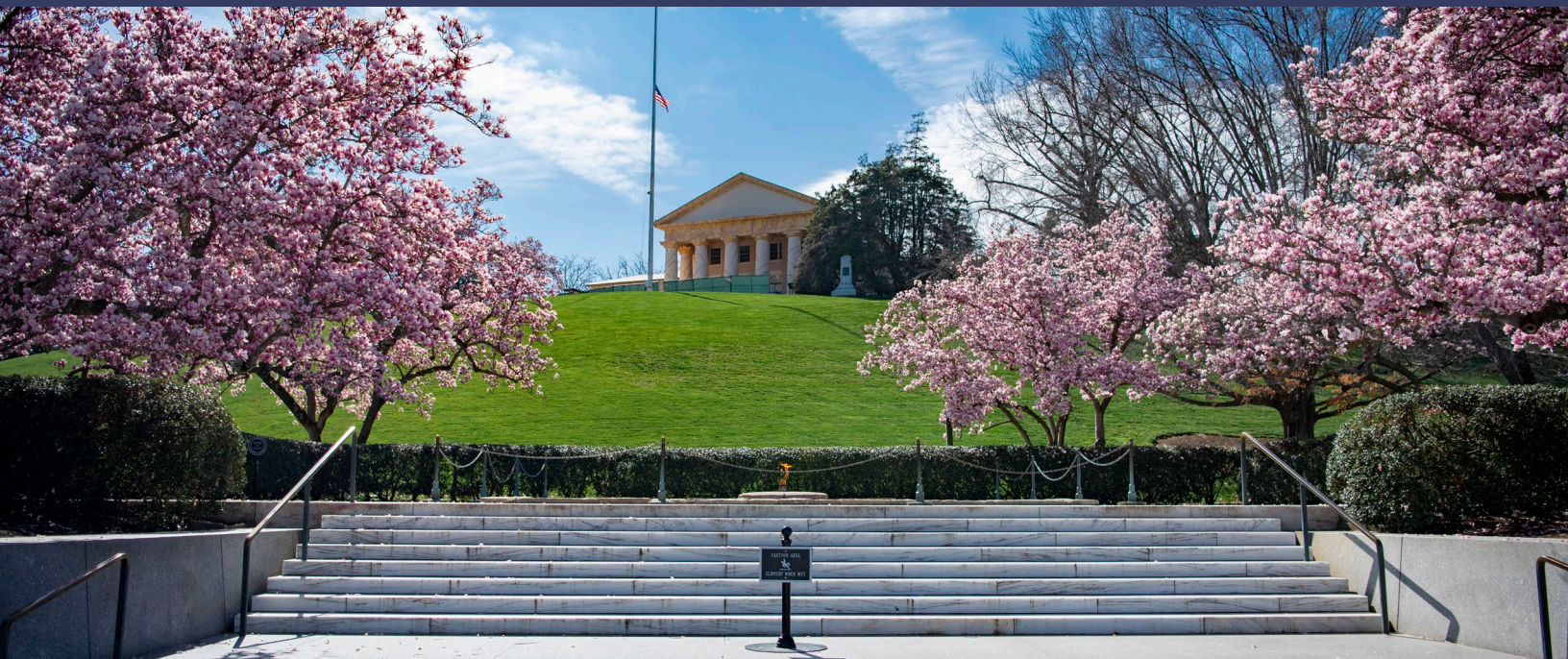
A redbud tree blooming in Section 27. (Arlington National Cemetery/Rachel Larue, 2016)

What other flowering trees can be found at Arlington National Cemetery?

In April, 165 eastern redbuds (*Cercis canadensis*) burst with bright pink-purple buds. Most flowering trees produce flowers on the tips of stems, but the buds on these trees burst directly out of the bark as well as stems. While redbuds are scattered throughout the cemetery, the largest and oldest trees are located in Sections 13 and 34. The buds last for two weeks and are then followed by shiny, heart-shaped purple leaves. The leaves turn green throughout the summer.

ANC has two white-flowering redbud varieties, as well as 24 Chinese redbud trees. Chinese redbuds grow up to 10 feet tall, while the native eastern redbud can grow up to 30 feet tall. [CONTINUED]





Saucer magnolias in bloom near John F. Kennedy's gravesite. (Arlington National Cemetery/Elizabeth Fraser, 2020)

[CONTINUED] Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) is the state tree of Virginia. The arboretum includes several selectively cultivated varieties of flowering dogwood, including a double-flowered variety.

The cornelian cherry dogwood's (*Cornus mas*) yellow flowers are an early sign of spring, blooming in late February to early March.

Crabapples, including the Japanese flowering crabapple (*Malus floribunda*), can be found around the Welcome Center and at the Kennedy gravesites.

Saucer magnolias (*Magnolia x soulangeana*) flank the plaza at John F. Kennedy's gravesite. The arboretum has a number of other magnolia species, including a few yellow-flowered varieties.

Other flowering trees at ANC include serviceberry trees, buckeyes, horse chestnut trees, fringe trees, smoke trees and yellowwoods.





Autumn leaves nearby the McClellan Gate. (Arlington National Cemetery/Rachel Larue, 2016)

When is fall foliage at its peak?

Typically, peak foliage occurs in late October to early November, when the leaves of the maples, gums, oaks, dogwoods and other trees change colors before falling to the ground. Peak foliage is affected by temperature, light and water supply, so duration and intensity vary from year to year.





Witch hazel nearby the gravesite of British Field Marshall Sir John Dill. (Arlington National Cemetery/Kelly Wilson, 2014)

What species of shrubs are found at Arlington?

There are over 200 species of shrubs, including witch hazel, winterberry holly and roses.

The hybrid Memorial Day tea rose is a favorite of both visitors and staff, as it blooms from Memorial Day until freezing temperatures arrive in November or December. Unlike other varieties of roses which have had the fragrance bred out of them, the Memorial Day rose still smells sweet.





Plants surround Columbarium Court 9. (Arlington National Cemetery/Jennifer Lynch, 2013)

How do the thousands of plants at ANC get adequate water?

The cemetery grounds have very little irrigation, so plants must be able to withstand Virginia's hot summers. The flowering ground cover common periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) once filled Columbarium Court rows, but it demanded four months of watering during the hot summers. It has been replaced with varieties of ice plant (*Deslosperma*), stonecrop (*Sedum*) and liriopé, and ANC continues to experiment with various ground covers.





Plants in a rain garden at Arlington National Cemetery. (Arlington National Cemetery/Kelly Wilson, 2019)

What are rain gardens and are there any at Arlington National Cemetery?

Rain gardens are constructed landscape depressions that allow water to soak into the ground instead of running into storm drains. They reduce and filter sediment and pollutants, control flooding and erosion, and support native plants that feed butterflies, moths, bees and birds.

ANC's rain gardens are located near the Administration Building and at the south end of the cemetery.





A maintenance man mows the grass at Arlington National Cemetery. (Arlington National Cemetery, 2019)

How often does the grass get mowed?

Over 500 acres of Arlington National Cemetery is covered by highly maintained turfgrass. During the growing season, the grass is mowed at least once a week and maintained at a height of 3.5-5 inches. Each year, nearly 18 acres are sodded and 30 acres are renovated to restore whole sections of the cemetery. All of the turf is aerated twice annually.





Sources:

ArbNet. "Levels of Accreditation." Accessed December 20, 2019. <http://www.arbnet.org/accreditation/levels-accreditation>

Arlington National Cemetery. "Memorial Arboretum and Horticulture." Accessed December 20, 2019. <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore-the-Cemetery/Memorial-Arboretum-and-Horticulture/Welcome>

Arlington National Cemetery. "Memorial Arboretum: Trees." Accessed December 20, 2019. <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Memorial-Arboretum-and-Horticulture/Trees>

Arlington National Cemetery. "Sustainable Practices." Accessed December 20, 2019. <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Explore/Memorial-Arboretum-and-Horticulture/Sustainable-Practices>

National Register of Historic Places Program. "Arlington National Cemetery Historic District Registration Form." Last modified April 11, 2014. <https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/14000146.pdf>





Images:

Page 2: Fraser, Elizabeth. Seasonal Highlights at ANC. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, March 10, 2020. <https://flic.kr/p/2iDgu4f>

Page 3: Fraser, Elizabeth. Spring 2020. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, March 17, 2020. <https://flic.kr/p/2iFMsqD>

Page 4: Fraser, Elizabeth. Arboretum Horticulture Tour. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, November 17, 2017. <https://flic.kr/p/GGnghk>

Page 5: Fraser, Elizabeth. ANC Horticulture Team Gives a Tour of the Memorial Arboretum to Members of the American Public Gardens Association. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, June 21, 2019. <https://flic.kr/p/2ghS2Ym>

Page 6: Bohan, Melissa. Empress Tree. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, August 2, 2013. <https://flic.kr/p/x1Fdhs>

Page 6: Fraser, Elizabeth. Dwarf Hackberry National Champion Tree. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, September 21, 2018. <https://flic.kr/p/28xo9PU>

Page 7: Wilson, Kelly. Asclepeiasas the wall July 2015. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, July 2015.

Page 8: Fraser, Elizabeth. Spring 2020. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, March 20, 2020. <https://flic.kr/p/2iG6VZ4>

Page 9: Larue, Rachel. Spring in Arlington National Cemetery. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, April 15, 2016. <https://flic.kr/p/Gi8q1K>

Page 10: Fraser, Elizabeth. Spring 2020. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, March 17, 2020. <https://flic.kr/p/2iFHfck>

Page 11: Larue, Rachel. Autumn in Arlington National Cemetery. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, November 4, 2016. <https://flic.kr/p/NQmkUj>

Page 12: Wilson, Kelly. Arlington National Cemetery Memorial Arboretum. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, April 1, 2014. <https://flic.kr/p/mETnfQ>

Page 13: Lynch, Jennifer. Columbarium Court 9. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, May 6, 2013. <https://flic.kr/p/eh5Vp5>

Page 14: Wilson, Kelly. LewisShelter_22Nov_2019. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, November 22, 2019.

Page 15: Mowing. Photograph. Arlington, Virginia: Arlington National Cemetery, December 16, 2019.

