

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



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

How large is Arlington National Cemetery?

The cemetery encompasses 639 acres of formal and informal landscapes and contains approximately 430,000 graves. Throughout the grounds there are more than 9,800 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 and offering educational programs to the public.

In 2018 (and renewed in 2023), 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, participates in tree science and conservation and has a dedicated curator.





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 26 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 140 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>





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 of cherry trees.

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

The 'Yoshino' cherry tree, the same tree found at the Tidal Basin, is the most common cherry tree at ANC and can be found 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.





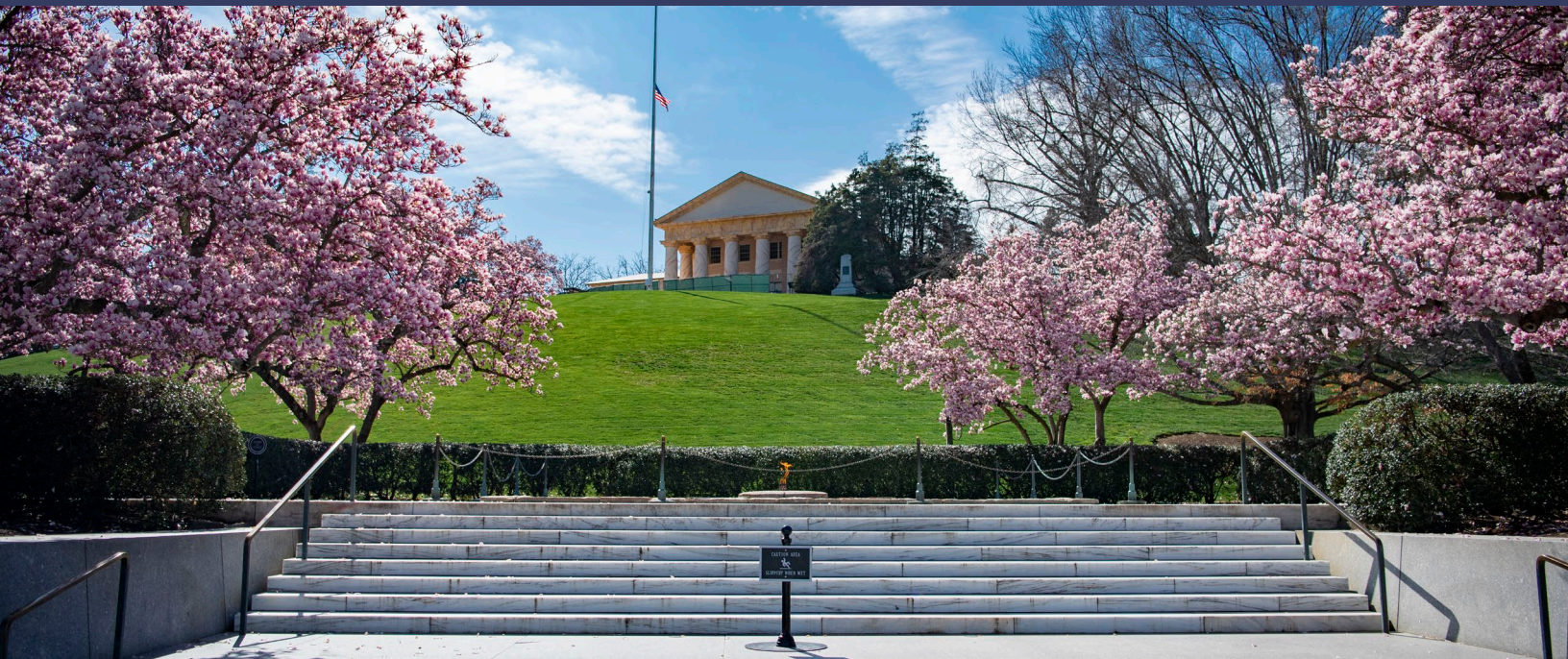
A redbud tree blooming in Section 27. (Arlington National Cemetery/Rachel Larue, 2016)

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 cultivated varieties of flowering dogwood, including a double-flowering variety.

The cornelian cherry flowering 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-flowering 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, sweet 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 ice plant (*Deslosperma*), stonecrop (*Sedum*) and Liriope, 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.





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Images:

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