



Arboretum Discovery Trail

(1 km, approx walking time 30 minutes, optional side trails)

Welcome to the **Aurora Community Arboretum**.

Established in 1995 under an Adopt-a-Park agreement with the Town of Aurora, the Aurora Community Arboretum comprises over 100 acres of land along the East Holland River and includes over 100 species of trees and shrubs. The volunteer members of the Arboretum aim to establish a tree and woody plant collection throughout the valley with a balance of formal planting of specimen trees and naturalized areas of forest, meadow and wetlands.

The valley is already well-used by the public through the network of pathways and sports facilities. The Master Plan for the Arboretum, endorsed by the Town, is used to provide direction for current and future plantings.

You are invited to use the map to follow a **self-guided trail** though the southeast part of the Arboretum. The trail begins and ends at the gazebo and follows gravel and mowed grass paths with some moderate slopes. Each stop is marked with a numbered post to help you discover this beautiful urban oasis.

1 East Holland River Bridge

The East Holland River winds its way north through Aurora and eventually empties into Lake Simcoe. The Holland River watershed is under the stewardship of Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. The river and adjacent banks provide important habitat for mammals including mink and beaver as well as many songbirds. If you approach the river quietly, you may see mallard ducks dabbling for food.

Follow the gravel path southeast to Post 2.

2 Commemorative Trees

The Arboretum Board of Directors has coordinated the planting of over 60 species of trees and shrubs through private donations and the cooperation of the Town of Aurora. Members of the public choose to honour loved ones and commemorate special events. Arboretum volunteers water and mulch the trees in their first years of growth. Take some time to read the many plaques along the trails and learn the significance of each specimen tree. Each plaque includes the English common name and the Latin botanic name.

Continue east to Post 3, located on the south side of the path.

3 A Living Fossil (*Ginkgo biloba*)

This tree has gained fame in recent years as an important ingredient herbal medicine as a memory aid. *Ginkgo biloba* or Maidenhair Tree is the world's oldest living tree, having a fossil record over 250 million years old. This means that Ginkgo shared the lands with dinosaurs! Its fan-shaped leaves are unmistakable. Ginkgo has two forms, a male and female tree. Since the female tree bears a foul-smelling plum-like fruit, it is the male form that is typically planted as an ornamental tree.

Follow the path over the bridge to Post 4.

4 Path Junction

Opposite Post 4, you will find a willow tree loaded with cone-like growths or galls. Each gall is the home of a midge, a small winged insect. The midge larvae release a chemical, changing the growth of the willow's leaves to form these protective homes. The self-guided trail now turns north, to follow a mowed grass pathway. Before heading north, you may wish to take a short side trip to our sheltered specimen tree area. (*See dotted yellow line on map.*) Here you will find the first trees planted in the Arboretum in 1996. The most notable are two Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*) specimens. Black walnut was extensively logged for furniture in previous centuries and is a very rare hardwood in Canada's deciduous forests.

5 Oak and Maple Trees

This area includes several examples of the six different species of oaks and eight species of maples planted in the Arboretum. Our goal is to plant a variety of the different tree families which can grow in this climate, providing visitors with opportunities for educational and scientific study.

Follow the grass path north to Post 6 by a pond.

6 Water-loving Wildlife

The storm water retention ponds provide aquatic habitat for wildlife in the Arboretum. The "hotdog" like flowers of the cattails are easily recognized and offer shelter to ducks, muskrat and amphibians. The ponds and adjacent meadows also provide much needed range of habitats for a variety of birds. Nesting boxes are installed and monitored by the Aurora Environmental Advisory Committee. Watch for red-winged blackbirds, great blue heron, tree swallows and goldfinches. Over thirty bird species use the Arboretum lands for foraging, nesting or migratory stops.

Follow the path along the south bank of the pond to Post 7

7 Meadow and Riparian Habitats

Look south over the meadow and cattail marsh. Since this area is flooded each spring, it remains a meadow; few tree species are naturally adapted to such wet conditions. The riparian zone is the area along a river bank. The trees of the riparian zone shade the Holland River and help to cool the water. Colder water temperatures provide two important benefits: the water can hold more oxygen for aquatic creatures and the microclimate above the area is cooled.

Nature's air conditioner works without burning fossil fuels!

Continue northwest along pond to meet the gravel path.

8 If this oak tree could talk...

Take time to admire the height and breadth of this magnificent Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*). There are several old giants like this in the Arboretum, planted by early farmers. The Aurora Museum holds records of land clearing and farming on the Arboretum lands beginning in the early 1800's. A short walk along the path and up the hill toward the houses on Woodruff Crescent will lead you to a Linden tree (*Tilia flavescens*) planted by the Willson family to commemorate 100 years of farming on this land. When you return to Post 8, look for the Larch or Tamarack tree specimens on the east side of the path. Larch (*Larix decidua*) is the only deciduous conifer – it bears cones but loses its needles every autumn.

To return to the gazebo, continue on the gravel path, over the bridge and turn right (west).

We hope you enjoyed your walk!

**For more information
or to become a member of the
Aurora Community Arboretum,
please contact us.**

905.727.6984

www.auroraarboretum.ca