

6. Sassafras  
*Sassafras albidum*

A quick look at the leaves of this tree will show an easy way to recognize sassafras trees. They have not one, but three distinct leaf forms – a particularity in the plant world.



The leaves, bark, and roots of sassafras contain oil that is distilled for use in scenting soaps and flavoring medicines. The roots can be brewed in a tea that has long been used as an herbal remedy to, “thin the blood and purify the system.”

In colonial times, sassafras was one of America’s chief exports, because of its perceived medicinal properties. These useful trees can live up to 1,000 years.

7. Pawpaw  
*Asimina triloba*

Pawpaw is a small tree in the mango family with large oval shaped leaves that grow up to a foot long. It is an important plant for wildlife. Its leaves are the only food source for the caterpillar of the beautiful Zebra Swallowtail butterfly.



Pawpaw is best known for its unique fruit, the largest edible fruit native to America - weighing up to a pound. Raccoon, fox, deer and other mammals rely on it. Although pawpaw is not a common human food crop, efforts are underway to breed trees to increase fruit production.

The fruit (which must be fully ripe to be palatable) has a texture akin to an avocado and a flavor similar to bananas. Its nutritional value exceeds that of apples, peaches and grapes in vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and calories. When food was scarce, pawpaw helped to feed the Lewis & Clark expedition.

8. Arrowwood  
*Viburnum dentatum*

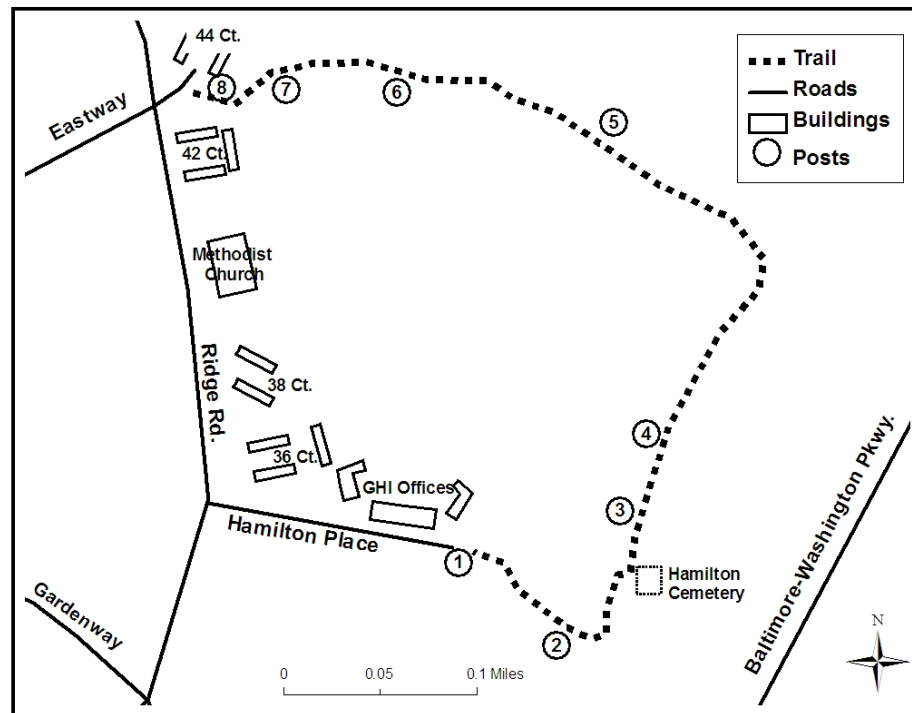
Arrowwood is a native shrub common along this trail and in other parts of Greenbelt. Though it grows best near places with ample water, it adapts well to many kinds of soils, and is a hearty native shrub.



Its flat-topped clusters of small white flowers attract many pollinators and birds enjoy its deep blue berry-like fruit in the fall. Several bird species use this shrub for nesting and cover. The Spring Azure butterfly larva also feed on arrowwood leaves.

Arrowwood gets its name from its strong, straight shoots that American Indians used as shafts for their arrows.

# Hamilton Self-Guided Trail



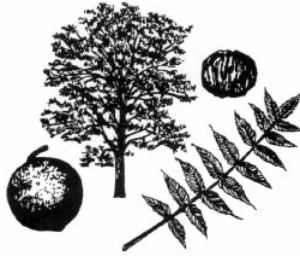
## Trail Description

The Hamilton Self-Guided Trail is an easy .6 mile nature trail connecting Hamilton Place (A) and 44 Court of Ridge at Eastway (B). Returning to the GHI Office along Ridge Road completes a one-mile loop. The trail traverses both a younger transitional forest and mature Oak-Hickory forest through GHI woodland parcels E & D and the City of Greenbelt Forest Preserve. The numbers in this guide correspond to posts along the trail where you can learn about the forest flora. Follow the Lavender blazes to stay on the trail.

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1. Black Walnut  
*Juglans nigra*

No, the name of the tree is not misleading. Our native black walnut is a close relative to trees that produce the nuts sold in stores. This plant is a sought-after forest food tree for squirrels deer and humans alike. Known for its beautiful wood grain, it has also been an important source of lumber since early American history.



You wouldn't know it to look at this grove now, but black walnut trees can grow 100 ft. high and 3ft. in diameter. Speaking of growth, see if you can find the flowers, catkins (strands of pollen), or its famous seeds, the black walnut. The catkins are found on last year's growth, and the flowers (which will later be the walnuts) bloom at the tip of this year's new growth. That means any twig extending beyond a flower or a walnut has grown since the formation of the flower.

2. Ailanthus  
*Ailanthus altissima*

Although the leaves of this tree are similar to our native Black Walnut, these two trees are very different from each other. A good way to tell them apart is by crushing a leaf. Ailanthus has a strong odor of rotten peanut butter. Beekeepers especially don't like this tree because honey made with its nectar tastes like the smell of the leaf.

Originally from Asia, Ailanthus is an aggressive grower that takes over and crowds out other plants near it. One study reports that a female tree can produce 325,000 seeds per year, and seeds aren't the only way it can spread. Young trees can also sprout up from a parent tree's root system and form dense colonies. These roots release a sort of natural herbicide that kill neighboring plants allowing Ailanthus plants to spread faster without competition.



Ailanthus is considered a non-native invasive species. This term is used to describe plants that are not naturally found in a region that have become aggressive to native plants. Controlling the spread of these types of plants is critical to protecting natural biodiversity.

3. Black Locust  
*Robinia pseudoacacia*

If you come by at the right season, you can look at this tree and see something you might not expect to see – pea pods. Black locust is a member of the legume (pea) family. As do most legumes, black locust, absorbs nitrogen from the air and chemically changes it into a



form that is useful for plant growth, making it an important part of the nitrogen cycle.

Black locusts are very common in Greenbelt and are known for their very hard, brittle wood. These quick growing trees also spread by runners and can often be found on the borders of forests such as where you are now standing.

4. Poison Ivy  
*Rhus radicans*

Yes, there is poison ivy on this trail – a good bit of it too. So watch out – the oils in this plant can cause a very itchy rash. This is because of a naturally-occurring chemical called Urushiol found in the leaves, vines, roots and berries. Poison ivy can even cause this reaction in winter, when there are none of hallmark “leaves of three” (or, actually, leaflets of three).



The vine in front of you gives a good example of how poison ivy can be recognized in the winter. Its reddish, hair-like roots that cling to the tree are a tell-tale sign of poison ivy. Notice that poison ivy can also grow branch-like vines out from its host tree that could be confused with limbs.

Indians used poison ivy in a form of chemical warfare. They burnt it and sent the fumes downwind into the lungs of the enemy. This is also a concern today for those fighting forest fires.

Despite its itchy characteristics poison ivy is an important wildlife plant. Not only are deer and rabbits unaffected by poison ivy – they eat it. Also, birds like its bright-red, high-fat berries as a winter food source.

5. Pignut Hickory  
*Carya glabra*

This young hickory doesn't have the scaly bark ridges typically found on an older tree, but this plant can be identified by its large leaf with its 5 – 7 lance shaped leaflets. An older tree, with its rough bark and strong smelling nut, can be found near marker #8 on this trail.



The hickory tree feeds a variety of animals. Squirrels, chipmunks, turkeys and songbirds all eat the nuts. Also, black bears, foxes, rabbits, and raccoons enjoy both the nuts and bark. Occasionally deer eat the leaves, twigs, or nuts. Humans find the nuts bitter, but we do prize hickory-smoked barbecue. Burning the green branches gives the best hickory flavor.

Hickory wood is an excellent fuel. A cord of hickory has the same heating capacity as a ton of coal. The wood from the hickory is heavy, hard, and strong and is used for tool handles and skis. Its density, bending qualities, and ability to withstand compression and shock made it popular for wagon wheels.