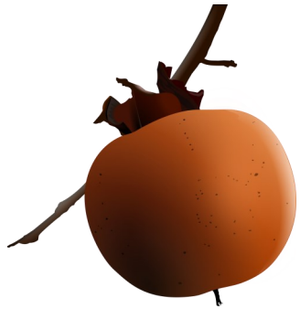
- **Persimmon** (*Diospyros virginiana)* Persimmon is a favorite in Midwestern and southern kitchens. The fruit is one of the last to ripen in the fall, often not being fully ripe until Halloween, and sometimes still producing until Thanksgiving. The orange fruits look similar to small wrinkled tomatoes, with a small brown cap of leaf-like material on top. The genus name *Diospyros* roughly translates to the "fruit of the gods." When unripe the fruit produces a strongly drying or **astringent** sensation to the mouth, make sure only well wrinkled and very soft fruit are collected! The leaf is similar to the black cherry, but without the serrations around the edge. The very black bark looks like rectangular building blocks. This tree rarely exceeds 14 inches in diameter and loves farm and field edges, as well as the banks of small ponds and streams.



- **Northern Red Oak** *(Quercus rubra)* is a large hardwood tree easily identified by its pointed, furrowed broad leaf and long smooth tracks on the upper portion of the tree's bark, often described as looking like "ski slopes." This tree is a favorite among wildlife including squirrels, turkeys, deer. These seeds, called **acorns,** contribute greatly to the food or **mast** available to wildlife in the fall. The wood has long been prized for its quality in furniture and flooring, being on of the best quality hardwoods.

Please carry out what you carry in.

CIGARETTE BUTTS ARE LITTER!
PLASTIC BOTTLES AND SODA CANS ARE LITTER!!

Thank you for visiting Giant City State Park.

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ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

This information may be provided in an alternative format if required. Contact the IDNR Clearinghouse at 217/782-7498 for assistance.

The Arrow-Wood Nature Trail

Self-Interpretive Trail

Fritillary Butterfly Giant City State Park 2016

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Giant City State Park
235 Giant City Road
Makanda, IL 62958
618-457-4836
http://www.dnr.state.il.us

Arrow-Wood Trail

Please take only pictures and leave only footprints.
Please stay on designated trails.
Poison ivy exists on this trail.
All plants, animals, and artifacts are protected by law in your state parks.

Trail Description

The Arrow-Wood Trail offers visitors a self guided experience. The trail begins in a restored Illinois tall grass prairie, planted in 1999 with native species. Follow the path into a beautiful woodland environment, with many of the tree species labeled for easy identification. The Arrow-wood trail offers a first hand look at forest succession, the way woodlands change over time. It was not long ago that this trail was a agricultural field. Slowly the habitat alters as water and sunlight demands change in the forest community . The first plants to emerge in an open field are weedy annual plants such as dandelions and pennywort. A few years later grasses and a perennials join them. After roughly a decade brambles and shrubs take over creating more shade and changing the population of plants underneath. When trees finally arrive, the first are often persimmon, sweet gum, cedar, and sassafras. These trees arrive first because they thrive in poor soils and produce fruit loved by wildlife, dispersing easily. After about 65 years this forest has begun to develop into thick canopy of hardwood trees, such as oak, maple, and hickory.

Common Trees on the Trail

- **Arrow-wood (*Viburnum dentatum)*** The namesake of this trail**,** arrow-wood is a large shrub, growing to about 20 feet tall. This shrub, the namesake of this trail, has very straight young stems in the center of the plant. This stems were used by Native Americans for arrow shafts. The blue-black fruit ripen in late summer or early autumn and are a favorite food for birds.

- **Eastern Redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana)*** This common cone-bearing tree or **conifer** has needle-like leaves arranged in scales. This tree is known for its strongly aromatic wood, fruit and leaves. This species, also called juniper, is one source of wood used in pet bedding and products, such as oils used to repel clothing moths. Cedars are often early succession species, being among the first trees to colonize meadows.

- **Black Cherry** (*Prunus serotina)* is easy to identify by its very dark bark often described as looking like burnt potato chips. The small waxy leaves have small serrations and often pinkish stems. The leaves themselves are toxic to many animals, but over 200 species of moth and butterfly caterpillars thrive on them, often incorporating the toxins for their own defense. Black Cherry leaves contain cyanide compounds, which often cause illness in grazing animals which browse the leaves of young trees in pastures and fencerows. The small black fruits, which ripen in mid to late summer are a favorite food for wildlife, especially birds such as waxwings.

- **Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum)*** is the source of delicious maple syrup. The sweet sap is harvested in the later summer by tapping the tree and then boiling down the syrup. It can take nearly 40 gallons of maple sap to produce just one gallon of syrup! Maple wood is considered a hardwood and is used widely in musical instruments, furniture, and even baseball bats. Look for a five pointed leaf (just like the Canadian flag) and light gray bark which peels in large woody sheets from the sides.

- **Sassafras** (*Sassafras albidum)* To identify this fragrant member of the laurel family, look for leaves which come in four forms. Sassafras has normal oval shaped leaves, left and right handed mitten shapes, and a "dinosaur paw" three lobed leaf. If you find a fallen leave on the ground, crush in and take a smell. A lemon or fruit-flavored cereal smell is typically very noticeable. The roots of this tree were the original source of root beer, however health concerns about the **safrole oil** contained in the bark and roots have prohibited its use. The leaves are also dried to make **filé** powder, a thickener and flavoring in dishes such as gumbo.