



Hog Rock Nature Trail



Explore!

The Hog Rock Nature Trail features a diverse man-made forest, some of the oldest rocks in the park, and rich cultural history. Each stop along this one-mile loop will highlight a unique feature bringing the sights, sounds, and feelings of this mountain forest alive.



Shagbark Hickory

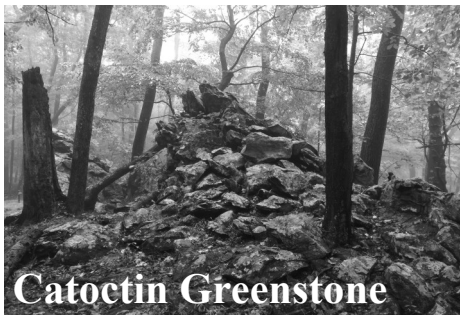


Shagbark hickory is a very strong wood, commonly used as handles for tools. President Andrew Jackson was nicknamed “Old Hickory,” because he was considered tough and sturdy like a hickory tree. The shaggy bark provides excellent habitat for bats to roost under. Look up and you just may see one, but be sure to let them roost in peace.

The sugar maple was a prized tree for those who lived on the mountain. Sap is collected, then boiled down creating the familiar sweet treat. It takes 32 gallons of sap to create just 1 gallon of syrup. As summer fades into fall its green leaves change to amber yellows, burnt oranges, and vibrant reds.



Sugar Maple



The rocks you see before you are some of the oldest in the park. Molten lava rose to the surface 500 million years ago, creating a type of igneous rock called basalt. Later immense heat and pressure changed the rock. Green minerals, such as epidote and chlorite, are what give the rock its green hue.

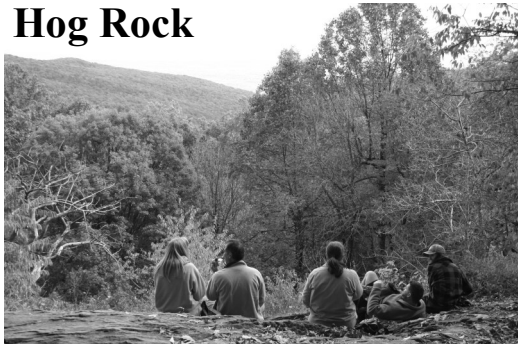
Catoctin Greenstone

With its vibrant and early spring colors the dogwood is a prized ornamental tree. There are few examples along this trail because of a deadly fungal epidemic destroying populations in the region. Like the American chestnut a century ago, these trees will one day disappear from the forest canopy.



Dogwood

Hog Rock



Before Catoctin was a national park, major sections of the land were used for farming. Hog Rock was a favorite location for pigs to graze. The nearby oak, beech, and chestnut trees provided ample food, and the rock outcrop was an excellent location for the hogs to sun themselves.

About This Place

Catoctin Mountain has seen many changes. Early American Indians quarried rhyolite to make tools and projectile points. Later European colonists mined iron from the mountain and felled the forest to fuel a furnace that processed the iron ore. This mountain was systematically deforested over the course of the iron making operation. The woods you stand in today are less than 100 years old, planted by the Civilian Conservation Corp and Works Progress Administration in 1936.

Be sure to explore the Charcoal Trail, near Thurmont Vista, to discover how trees and charcoal helped make Catoctin the mountain it is today!

Continue further down this trail to discover more!

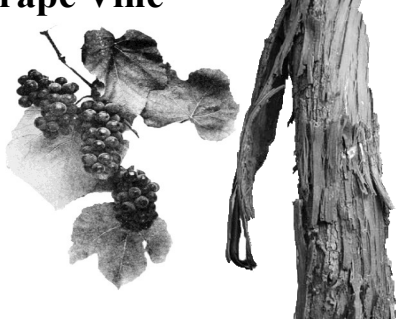
Onward!

The American beech tree produces the beechnut, which is a favorite among small mammals and bears. Beech trees have smooth, soft bark that is commonly carved into. Carving into trees is seriously damaging, making them vulnerable to disease and insects.



Beech

Grape Vine



Leaves/Fruit

Vine

This species of wild grape vine is called fox grape. The name comes from the musky “foxy” taste they have. While these grapes are edible, and a favorite among forest wildlife, they generally aren’t preferred for cooking or baking. These Fox Grapes are, however, a parent species of the Concord Grape which is widely used for jellies and juices. Wild grapes use tendrils to grab a hold of the bark and pull themselves upward to the sunlit canopy.

The red oak is known for its visually stunning fall foliage. With their brilliant reds the mountain side is illuminated by these common forest giants. Most commonly used for lumber, the red oak is a fast growing tree towering over neighboring species. Squirrels and chipmunks are regularly seen scurrying around them searching for treasure troves of acorns to stash away for the cold winter months. The leaves of the red oak feature sharp angular edges and the bark holds a red tint between the grooves.

Red Oak



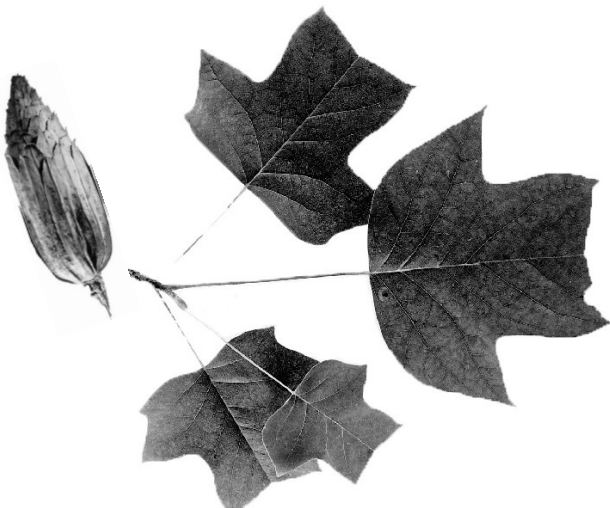
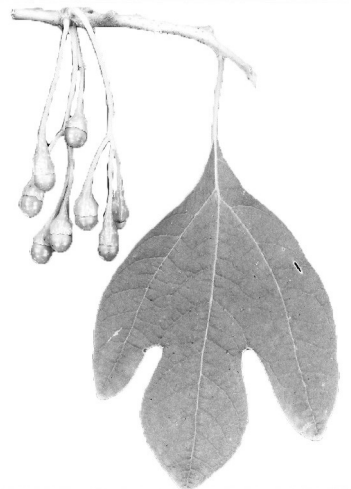
White Oak



The white oak is one of the most common trees found in Catoctin Mountain Park. It is strong and long lived, with an average life span of 450 years! The white oak sports rounded leaf edges and the bark is a consistent gray to whitish color. Bourbon is aged in barrels made from white oak wood. To discover more about the history of alcohol production and prohibition in Catoctin Mountain Park take a short stroll down the Blue Blazes Whiskey Still Trail.

Sassafras is an aromatic wood, which has made it popular for various uses. The leaves and roots are commonly used to make essential oils, teas, and sarsaparilla, a soda similar to root beer. The wood is commonly used for barrels, buckets, and as firewood because of its pleasantly warm scent. The berries and twigs are highly nutritious and favored snacks among deer and birds.

Sassafras



Tulip Poplar

Tulip poplars are very fragrant, canvassing the forest in sweet scents that signal the arrival of summer. It is fast growing, tall, easy to work with, and pest resistant. American Indians and European colonists favored these trees for construction. The showy yellow and orange flowers sport an abundant amount of nectar that is prized by pollinators and bakers alike for culinary use. A single flower can produce about half a teaspoon of nectar.

Today

Today Catoctin Mountain Park, a unit of the National Park Service, protects this resource and tells its story. Over the centuries American Indians, European colonists, and animals have used the plants and trees throughout the mountain.

While you explore the natural beauty we ask that you help maintain the wonder of what you may find. Remember to take only memories and leave only foot prints.