



PHOTO/CHELI MENNELLA

The Buttonball Tree in Sunderland is the largest American sycamore in Massachusetts and it still growing.



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An interesting feature on the Highland Park tree tour are the root flares of an elm, which are shaped like flying buttresses on cathedrals.

## Tree tour

FROM A2

Hampshire reveal the undulating beauty of the land and the vast expanse of the sky. Locals remember the maple as having a twin, the twosome growing together at the peak. Though that tree was deemed unsafe and felled two years ago, the memory of its image still shimmers on the hilltop.

Mt. Pollux itself is a twin, named by scientist Edward Hitchcock for the mythological Greek brothers, Castor and Pollux. The other twin, Mt. Castor, is located to the north. Find the conservation area on S. East Street in Amherst; a small sign indicates the driveway to parking. From there, it's a short walk for picnicking or leaf peeping at one of the best views in the Pioneer Valley.

### Buttonball Tree, Sunderland

Just past Sunderland center on N. Main St. is one of the most impressive (and famous) trees in the region. You can't miss it growing by the side of the road. The largest American sycamore in Massachusetts — the Buttonball

Tree — is truly massive. Measurements in 2017 determined this behemoth to be a flourishing 113 feet tall with a girth of 25 feet 8 inches, and a sweeping canopy that stretches 135.5 feet on enormous limbs.

Its name likely refers to the fruiting clusters the tree produces, which are called "buttonballs." The small, burr-like balls are comprised of seeds easily dispersed by wind and water. The trees typically root in lowlands, floodplain forests, and riverbanks. As they grow, they shed their outer bark, exposing a smooth, mottled inner bark that resembles camouflage.

Sycamores are one of our largest and longest-lived deciduous trees. A plaque commemorating the 200th anniversary of the Constitution recognizes the Buttonball as having lived during the time of its signing. The tree is estimated to be between 350 and 400 years old! Imagine the stories it can tell.

### A Forest of Trees, Highland Park, Greenfield

Arrive in downtown Greenfield and make your way to Highland Park for a self-guided tour designed by the



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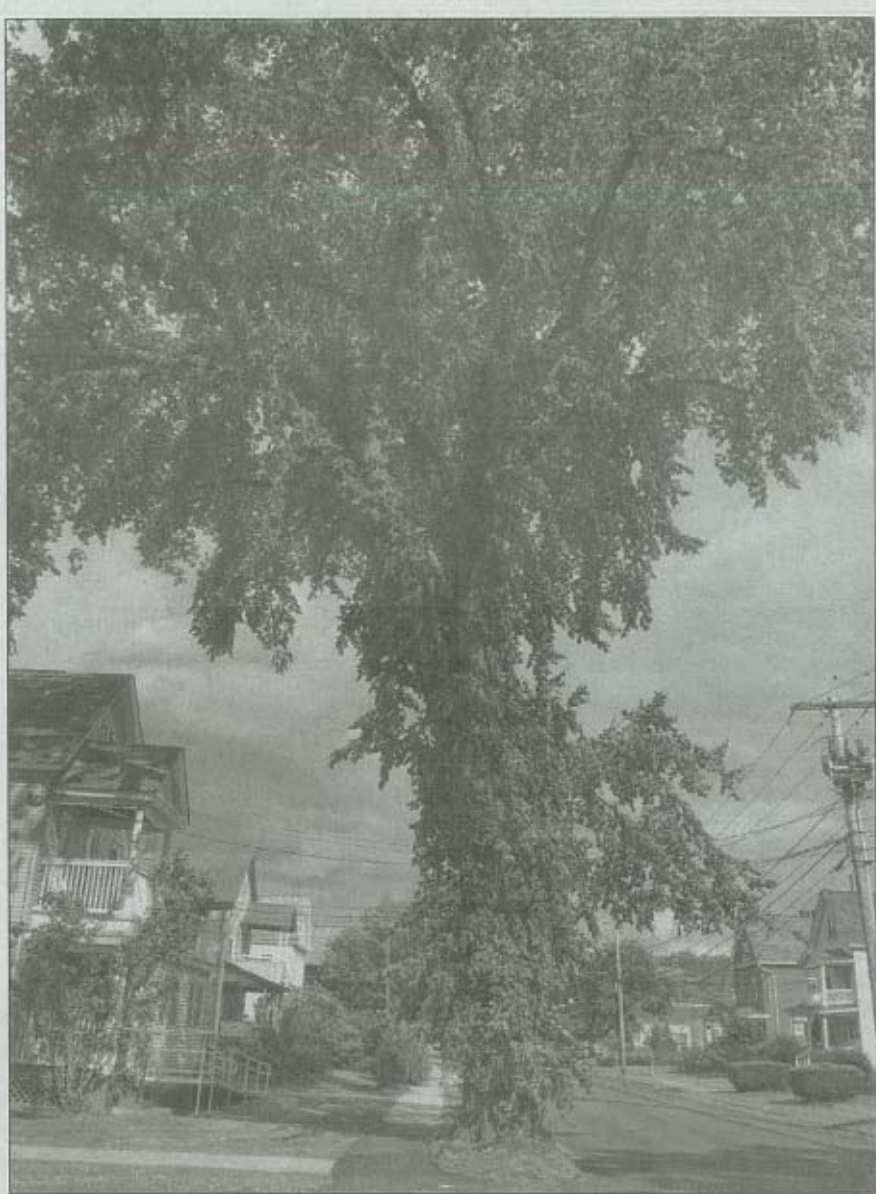
A footpath winds through a quiet grove of trees in the forest of Highland Park.

Greenfield Tree Committee. Along a moderately flat and easy forest trail, you will be introduced to a diverse selection of native trees, including birch, pine, hemlock, hickory, linden, ash and

cherry. Meet an elder sugar maple and the silvery "Queen of the Park." Learn how to identify various tree species and features, like the deep grooves of

SEE TREE TOUR A4





PHOTO/CHELI MENNELLA

The Greenfield Tree Committee also offers a self-guided tree tour of Greenfield neighborhoods. This stately elm is the first tree on the tour.

## Tree tour

FROM A3

chestnut oak and why an elm might grow root flares that look like dragon wings or “flying buttresses.”

Find the tour map at [www.greenfieldtreecommittee.org](http://www.greenfieldtreecommittee.org), where you can also find a guided tour of neighborhood street trees. The route begins at a stately elm, which was saved by citizens from being cut down, and continues past the lindens on Linden Street and a significantly large catalpa.

For a somewhat different perspective, head to the Greenfield Community College athletic fields in the late afternoon. A tall oak stands by itself on the slope separating the fields. When the sun sinks, the tree casts a remarkable shadow onto the field below.

### Sanctuary Trees, Arms Cemetery, Shelburne Falls

The centerpiece of the Arms Cemetery is a wizened oak that greets visitors when they pass through the iron gates. Its heavy branches open wide

with welcome, its notched trunk full of character. This is an ancestor tree. You can feel it.

But it's not the only tree of interest here. The cemetery is home to stunning trees throughout the park-like setting. Single maples have ample space to spread their limbs, a pair of lofty spruces provide sanctuary for a small stone lamb, and clusters of oak and birch gather in the quiet of the burial grounds.

The location is a peaceful and beautiful place to stroll among the arbors. A paved road around the perimeter and inner circles makes this a highly accessible stop. Find the Arms Cemetery just off the Mohawk Trail outside the village of Shelburne Falls.

### Collegiate Champions, Smith College, Northampton

The final destination on the tour is Smith College in Northampton. The entire campus was originally planned and planted as a botanic garden and arboretum, making the grounds a unique consortium of tree life. A campus tree tour introduces 40 different

SEE TREE TOUR A5