



## American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) – Giant of the Forest



### Did you Know?

Beech bark disease is currently threatening the species across its entire range.

Early settlers often looked for beeches as a sign of a good potential place to clear the forest for farming.

They often maintain their papery leaves in the winter, long after other trees have shed theirs.

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**Habitat** – Grows best on deep, fertile, moist and well drained soils, bottomlands and slopes.

**Size** – Medium-sized to large trees, up to 35 meters high and 90-100 centimeters in diameter. Can reach 300 years old or more.

**Range** – This tree can be found in eastern North America, from Nova Scotia west to southern Ontario in southeastern Canada, west to Wisconsin and south to eastern Texas and northern Florida in the United States.

**Status** – Ontario Status: S5, Secure. Canadian Status: Secure.

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### Identification:

The Beech Tree can be identified fairly easy. Look for dark green, simple leaves that have toothed edges and distinct straight veins. The bark is smooth and grey, often referred to as resembling an Elephants leg. The winter twigs are distinctive as well with the





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buds being long and slender resembling tiny cigars. The nuts are triangular and covered with a hairy husk.

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## Interesting Facts

It is an important tree in forestry as the wood is hard, tough and heavy and it is used for woodenware, flooring, containers, furniture and handles.

The smooth bark is a favorite for vandals to carve names, symbols, dates and other things. These will remain for years on the bark and are a wound that can actually allow fungus and disease into the tree.

The nuts are a favorite food for wildlife. Black bears especially love them and will often climb the tree and sit in crutch of the trunk and pull the nut-laden branches towards them and gorge themselves. Many Beech trees have scars on their trunks from bear claw marks.

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## The American Beech on the Niagara Escarpment

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is continually acquiring and protecting land along the Niagara Escarpment, including forested areas with rich soil that provides a perfect place for the Beech tree to grow. You will be able to see this tree growing amongst Sugar Maples in the mature forests along the Bruce Trail.

One of the Bruce Trail Heritage Trees is an American Beech and can be seen in the Dufferin Section on the BTC managed Pollock property found on map 20 of the Bruce Trail Guidebook, edition 28 near km 29.4. This specific tree is about 160 years old with a diameter of 68 centimeters.