

# Meet the Trees!

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[Steer Swamp Conservation Area](#) is one of Marblehead's hidden gems. With 1.64 miles of trail winding through 48.8 acres, families can happily get lost, but not too lost, in its natural beauty. It offers several different microclimates to explore, including ponds, seasonal streams, wetlands, and upland forests. Steer Swamp checks all of the boxes to help balance screen time with the significant benefits of [nature-based play and learning](#). The National Wildlife Federation aptly calls these meaningful experiences the [Green Hour](#). I call it attitude adjustment hour because it works every time. So lace up your sneakers, grab a few snacks and a reusable water bottle, and meet the trees!

Attached to this sheet, you will find the [Marblehead Conservancy](#) trail map of Steer Swamp. Use the tree numbers to help you find these special trees on your hike! Take a clipboard and pencil to draw a picture of each tree or take notes on what you observe.

Tree & Tree Numbers	Features & Wildlife Benefits	My Drawing & Observations
<p>#1 American Beech</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The bark looks like wrinkly grey elephant skin</li> <li>• leaves are elliptical or eye-shaped and turn orange in fall</li> <li>• Beeches are one of the last trees to drop their leaves</li> <li>• Autumn beechnuts are eaten by birds and mammals, serving as an essential food for chipmunks and squirrels</li> </ul>	
<p>#2 Eastern White Pine</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mature trees have thick, brown to black, deeply grooved bark with broad, scaly ridges</li> <li>• Needles are 3-5 inches long and in bunches of five</li> <li>• Cones light brown, in clusters of 1-5 and 4-8 inches long</li> <li>• Eastern white pine seeds are favored by black bears, rabbits, red squirrels, and many birds</li> </ul>	

### #3 Sugar Maple



- Mature trees have dark brown irregular bark that is deeply furrowed (deep rifts or valleys between each plate of bark); the sap is clear
- Fall leaves are yellow and burnt orange and have 3-5 lobes or major points
- Two attached seeds hang down together at a narrow angle
- Sugar maples are commonly browsed by white-tailed deer, moose, and snowshoe hare. Squirrels feed on the seeds, buds, twigs, and leaves. They provide homes for many animals

### #4 Norway Maple



- Mature trees have grey-brown regularly grooved dark, with shallow interlacing ridges, and the sap is milky-white
- Fall leaves are yellowish-brown, sometimes wider than long, 5-7 lobes or major points
- Two wings of a Norway maple seed spread at almost a 180-degree angle from each other.
- Considered an invasive tree from Europe, Norway maple negatively impacts sugar maple/American beech forests of the northeast by dominating the seedling layer and displacing shade tolerant native species

### #5 Paper Birch



- Mature trees have smooth white bark that curls and peels
- Leaves are oval-shaped, double-saw toothed, 2-4 inches long, and bright yellow in fall
- White-tailed deer eat paper birch leaves in the fall, beavers find it a good second choice food, and porcupines feed on the inner bark. Voles, shrews, Redpolls, siskins, and chickadees eat the seeds. Numerous cavity-nesting birds nest in paper birch.

### #6 River Birch



- Mature trees have cinnamon-colored bark that curls and peels
- Can grow as either a single- or multi-stemmed tree trunk
- Leaves are diamond or oval-shaped and 2-3 inches long, yellow in fall
- The catkins are used by redpolls and pine siskins. The foliage is eaten by deer and other browsers. The small but plentiful seeds are appreciated by a wide variety of songbirds.

### #7 Eastern White Oak



- The bark is light ashy gray, scaly or shallow furrowed, variable in appearance, often broken into small, narrow, rectangular blocks and scales
- Leaves are 4-8 inches long with 3-4 rounded, finger-like lobes on each side and one at the tip, showy wine-red to orange-red in the fall.
- Acorns are 1 inch long, and the cap covers  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the nut
- The acorns are gathered, hoarded, and eaten by birds, deer, and rodents. Leaf buds also are eaten by several bird species.

### #8 Northern Red Oak



- Bark has flat, smooth, and shallow ridges running down the tree – which have a hint of red in them
- Leaves 4-8 inches long and have 7-11 waxy, spine-tipped lobes, bright red fall color
- Acorns are  $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 inch long, egg-shaped, and the cap is said to resemble a beret.
- Acorns favored by blue jays, wild turkeys, squirrels, small rodents, whitetail deer, raccoons, and black bears. Deer also browse the buds and twigs in wintertime.



# STEER SWAMP

