

Please remain off trails that are marked closed.

After Stop 7, you will come to the trail intersection marked "V" on the map. Stay to the left (do not go downhill into the valley, unless you would like to go for a longer hike away from the route in this booklet). Beyond this, a square wooden post is marked "AA" in small letters. Go left. The next intersection is BB. Go right here. This trail winds back to the parking lot.

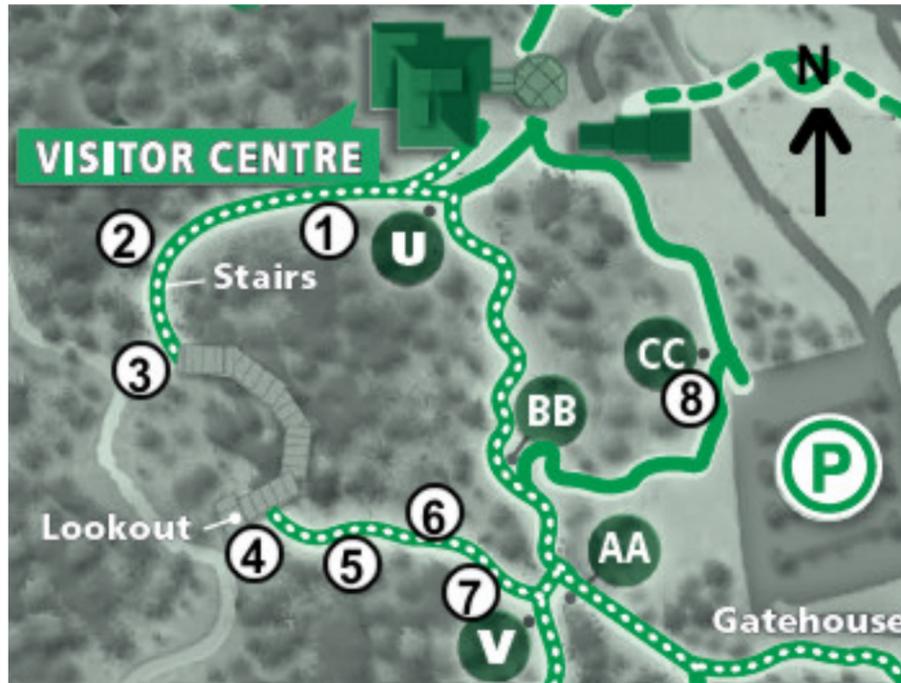
## 8. From Little Acorns Grow Mighty Animals

If you look down at your feet here, the ground is littered with acorns from the Red Oak. While animals prefer acorns from white oaks, which are less bitter, Red Oaks are more abundant in our area. Acorns are important food for red and gray squirrels, blue jays, and white-tailed deer.

Deer eat a lot of acorns. They are rich in carbohydrates and fats, and help deer fatten up for the winter. White-tailed deer need 2.5 to 4 kilograms of food per day, and when the acorns fall, they can make up a good portion of the daily needs.

Gray squirrels (most gray squirrels in Ontario are black in colour) will hide individual acorns by digging them into the ground in different places. Red squirrels will eat acorns as well, but prefer the seeds inside evergreen cones. Unlike the grays, red squirrels store their winter food supply in one big pile, called a cache. Look for big piles of pine or spruce cones at the base of coniferous trees, or mounds of scales from the cones, which they have peeled to get at the seeds.

One blue jay may hide as many as 5,000 seeds and nuts, including acorns, as far as two kilometres from their normal territory. No, their memory is not perfect. Forgotten acorns grow up to be trees, and scientists think that blue jays helped repopulate Ontario's hardwood forests after the glaciers of the ice age retreated.



We hope you enjoyed using our self-guided trail pamphlet, feel free to bring this pamphlet home with you or return it to the desk in the visitors centre so other guests can enjoy it. Thank you for visiting us at the Kortright Centre for Conservation, come back soon!

# Fall Colours Self-Guided Hike

AS THE FALL COLOURS BLAZE AROUND US, JOIN US FOR A SHORT HIKE ON THE FORESTRY TRAIL TO MEET THE WOODY WONDERS OF THE HARDWOOD FOREST

- The trail should take about 45 minutes to complete. This trail meanders up and down hills and includes some stairs. (SEE MAP ON REVERSE)
- Please respect the environment by staying on the trail, and not picking any plants along the way
- The trail begins out the west exit door from the lower level of the Kortright Visitor Centre

## 1. Is there a Fish in that Tree?

Basswood might sound like it is a roosting tree for flying fish, but the name comes from the word bast, which refers to the strong, woody fibres from the inner bark of the tree. These fibres were once used for rope making.

The ancestors of today's Huron-Wendat people, who, in the 1500's lived in a village on the Kortright lands, used basswood bark as their primary source of rope and cordage. The bark was stripped from the tree, and put into a swamp for up to a month. Sometimes the bark was boiled as well. This degraded other tissues in the bark, leaving long, strong parallel fibres running the length of the tree. The material comes apart in layers that look like ribbon. To make rope, two strands are rolled separately with the palm of the hand along the thigh, and allowed to twist together in the opposite direction. Rope was incredibly important: longhouses were tied together with rope; a fishnet across a river might require hundreds of metres of rope. The fibers were also used for baskets and other technology. Early European immigrants described the First Nations' cordage as superior to their own. Basswood rope is incredibly strong.

Wood carvers also like Basswood. It is one of the lightest deciduous trees, and easy to carve. Duck decoys are often made of Basswood

Basswood Leaf



## 2. Hemlock Heights

After the White Pine, the Eastern Hemlock may be the biggest conifer in the forests of southern Ontario. The tallest specimen in North America reached 53 metres. You can tell Hemlock apart from similar trees by looking closely at the needles. Hemlock needles are short ( 1-2 cm ) and arranged flat on the branch. White spruce needles are a bit longer and go all around the branch. Fir needles are arranged flat, but are longer than Hemlock or Spruce.

Hemlocks can grow in very shady conditions. This is a good thing for a young Hemlock, as the thick canopy of needles on the mature trees lets very little light through to the forest floor. This is one reason a stand of Hemlocks has very little undergrowth beyond and the occasional Hemlock sapling.

Hemlock not only keep the sun off the forest floor – in the winter, the branches densely covered with the short needles are able to hold up a lot of snow. This is good news for white-tailed deer; their small and pointy hooves punch deep into the snow. Deer have trouble getting around in open areas where snow accumulates to 40 or 50 centimetres. Deer seek out stands of conifers, especially Hemlock, and gather there in winter. These areas are known as deer yards. Here, the snow depth can be up to 40% lower than in the wide open hardwood stands.

Hemlock needles can be made into a vitamin C-rich tea, much like cedar tea. And no, it's not the Hemlock that Socrates drank. That is an herbaceous plant, not a tree. If he drank tea from the Hemlock tree, he would have had a longer career.

Hemlock Needles



### 3. The Forgotten Maple

Most people who spend time in Ontario Forests recognize the different native maple species by their leaves – Sugar maple, Silver maple and Red maple being the best known. Many people fail to recognize a relative that makes up a large fraction of Kortright’s maple population – the Black Maple. Take a close look through the fallen leaves here at this stop on the trail. Sugar Maple leaves have more points, and they are sharper. Black Maple leaves have fewer points, sometimes only three lobes, and are more rounded. The Black Maple leaves are a bit more robust, with slightly hairy undersides.

Some scientists consider the Black Maple to be a subspecies of the Sugar Maple. For maple syrup producers, there is no significant difference in the sugar content. For woodworkers, the wood is a touch lighter and softer than Sugar Maple,

Try this: without paying attention to the type of maple leaves, collect a large number along the trail. Now count them into Black and Sugar Maple piles. You now have a rough idea of the ratio of Black to Sugar Maples in the Kortright forest! You can even do this for all the tree species in this forest– I think you’ll find that Maples, Black and Sugar, win the contest.

Sugar Maple



Black Maple



### 4. White Pine Fever

Look at the ridge across the river, where a row of tall White Pines, with their familiar irregular “Group of Seven” silhouette emerge from the canopy, taller than all the mightiest maples and oaks.

If you’re an Ontario resident, you should take off your hat and salute this mighty tree. Many of us don’t realize that the White Pine is our provincial tree. This ruler of the forests of Upper Canada earned its reputation back in the 1800’s when white pine fever gripped the forests of the colony. Napoleon had imposed a trade embargo against Great Britain, and the Royal Navy lost its sources of timber in Europe. The Admiralty needed tall and massive masts up to 37 metres tall for its sailing ships, and the White Pine was one of the few trees that grew tall, thick and strong enough to fit the bill. In fact, the tallest officially measured specimen in North America reached a height of 63 metres – taller than a 20 storey building. Logging companies sprung up all over the colony to take advantage of the untouched old-growth forests. Trees were cut in the winter, with company territories determined by the watersheds of rivers they used to float the trees out in the spring. Many settlers were able to leave the farm in the winter and head into the woods to make a cash salary cutting timber. At one time it is said that half the able bodied men in the province were employed at some point by the logging industry.

Although people thought of the forests as endless, by the 1850’s most of the big pine were gone. There are a few old-growth stands left in the province, the tallest old White Pine left in Canada measuring 45 metres.

To the Haudenosaunee, the People of the Long-house (who the French called the Iroquois) the White Pine is the Great Tree of Peace. The five needles joined together represent the original Five Nations (later six).



White Pine Silhouette (After Casson)

### 5. Beech Party

The American Beech stands out in the hardwood forest because of its smooth gray bark, looking somewhat like the skin of an elephant. Like the other trees of a stable, mature forest, it can grow in the shade of its parents, so the composition of the forest stays constant as new generations replace the old. Beech are common in Maple forests, which are often referred to as Maple-Beech forests.

Beech produce a seed called a Beech nut which is triangle shaped, a bit spiky and has two or three seeds inside. Some years, beech nuts grow in great numbers. They are a food source for ruffed grouse, wild turkeys, raccoons, red foxes, white-tailed deer, rabbits, squirrels, opossums, and porcupines. While Kortright forests have not had bears for decades, in other parts of North America bears love Beech nuts so much they will climb the trees to get them. Their sharp claws make markings on the smooth bark of the trunk, leaving tracks up the tree that persist for years.



Beech Bark



Beech Nut

### 6. One Tough Tree

While this humble, shaggy tree doesn’t grow to the soaring heights of a white pine, or a sugar maple, it has the distinction of being one of the hardest woods in local forests. In fact, it is known as Ironwood, but this common name is not helpful to scientists, as every part of the world has a local, hard and heavy wood that they call Ironwood!

This particular Ironwood is also known as Eastern Hop Hornbeam. It can be identified by its shaggy bark, peeling off in long, thin strips. It is an understory tree, never growing big enough to reach the canopy. In settler times, the wood was used for axe and tool handles. It is 10% heavier than Sugar Maple, and almost 30% harder.

### 7. This Tree Might Save Your Life

This is a stand of White Spruce. Notice that the lower branches have no needles. They are dead, unable to gather sunlight thanks to the dense canopy of branches and needles above them.

If you found yourself lost in the woods, with bad weather coming in and the need to quickly make a fire, those delicate, finely branched dead lower limbs provide some of the best kindling you will find in Ontario forests. Because they are not laying on the ground getting soggy, these twigs are air and wind dried. Quickly gathered and loosely laid on top of tinder of birch bark or paper, they will quickly take the flame of your match or lighter, and spread it efficiently to thicker twigs you have laid on top.

Spruce was important to the First Nations communities, as the roots were used as a heavy-duty cord for basketry, and tying birch bark canoes together. Furthermore, the sticky sap, known as Spruce gum, was used to waterproof the canoes.

DID YOU KNOW? Needles from Spruce (and other evergreens) can be made into tea.



Spruce Needles