Welcome!

The Story of Finch Arboretum

In 1907, the Spokane Board of Park Commissioners marked off a mile-long strip of land along Garden Springs Creek for a future garden space. The rest of the land for an arboretum was purchased in 1912 by the Spokane Park Board. Meanwhile, in 1911, John Duncan, Park Superintendent in the 1940s, gave funds to the Parks Department for more landscaping find the Arboretum to be a valuable educational and scientific area. The Board of Park Commissioners decided to purchase the land for an arboretum in 1914. John A. Finch, a Spokane businessman, donated 65 acres of tree-covered land around the creek to the city of Spokane for the John A. Finch Arboretum.

Finch Arboretum opened to the public in 1949, planting the arboretum with 23 species began in earnest. The arboretum was designed by well-known landscape architect and naturalist Elmer J. Balser. Balser designed the planting plans. After Mr. Finch's estate was conveyed to the city by Tracy Rebstock - SpokaneHistorical.org.

O Happy Day! New trees are planted each year. The park contains a mile-long path along the creek, which is appreciated by all who enjoy nature’s beauty.

Restrooms are open May 1 through October 31, 2023. For more information, call 509-363-5466.

John A. Finch Arboretum

Map and Guide

Directions to John A. Finch Arboretum

From Interstate 90: Take Garden Springs Road (Exit 277); drive north off of the interstate. Turn right at stop sign onto West Sunset Blvd.; head downhill toward downtown Spokane; stay in the right lane. Watch for the brown entry signs; turn right onto “F” Street. Drive past the maintenance area on your right; look for Woodland Center of John A. Finch Arboretum. Welcome!

Seasonal Highlights

Flowering Display

Winter
December

Vernal witchhazel, daphne

Spring
March

Chinese witchhazel

April-May

dogwood, serviceberry, forsythia, spice bush, viburnum, maple, barberry, cherry, pear, plum, horsechestnut, magnolia, pear bush, lilac, chokeberry, deutzia, spirea, crabapple, rhododendron, laburnum, hawthorn, mock orange, honeyuckle

Summer

locust, beauty bush, catalpa, rhododendron, tulip tree, viburnum, spirea, azalea

July

hibiscus, hydrangea

August

stewartia, pea shrub

Color Display Fruit

Fall/Winter

January

Cornelian cherry

July

August

winged euonymous

October

azalea, crabapple, maple

November

hawthorn, oak, viburnum

December

hawthorn, Japanese barberry

John A. Finch Arboretum

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Visitor Guidelines

To preserve the beauty of the Arboretum and to make your visit pleasant, please observe the following guidelines:
- Please follow park rules and regulations posted.
- No pets allowed at any time.
- All walking surfaces are natural, uneven, and occasionally very soft.
- Bicycles only on roads and trails.
- Gather only material fallen from plants.

Welcome

The John A. Finch Arboretum is free and open to the public year round from dawn until dark. Restrooms are open May 1 through October 31, weather permitting. The gate to access parking for Lilac Lane and Corey Glen is open weekdays from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM from April 1 through October 31. For more information call 509-363-5466.

The John A. Finch Arboretum occupies nearly 65 acres of beautiful tree-covered land along Garden Springs Creek in the southwest part of Spokane. Our collections of trees and shrubs include natives of the inland northwest and plants from many parts of the world. They were selected as educationally useful, scientifically important and aesthetically attractive. The Arboretum is used as an outdoor classroom by naturalists, horticulturists, students, gardeners and photographers. Those interested in home landscaping find the Arboretum to be a valuable source of information on plants hardy enough to grow in the Spokane area. The Arboretum’s educational and scientific value are enhanced by seasonal programs and public events throughout the year. The park-like character and natural charm is appreciated by all who enjoy nature’s beauty.

The Story of Finch Arboretum

In 1907, the Spokane Board of Park Commissioners marked off a mile-long strip of land along Garden Springs Creek for a future garden space. The rest of the land for an arboretum was purchased in 1912 with the assistance of mining investor John A. Finch. There were already many shade trees planted by the previous owner who had a summer cottage near the creek.

John Duncan, Park Superintendent in the 1940’s, designed the planting plans. After Mr. Finch’s estate gave funds to the Parks Department for more plantings in 1949, planting the arboretum with 23 species began in earnest. Many century-old trees still stand, such as the huge White Willow in the center of the arboretum. These Heritage Trees are recorded by Spokane Urban Forestry as some of the oldest and largest of their kind in Spokane and, in some cases, Washington State. Just think of what they’ve seen and the people who have cared for them all this time!

Hungry for more history? Check out John A Finch Arboretum by Tracy Rebstock - SpokaneHistorical.org

While you wander through the arboretum, look for these tags and signs that reveal the dates they were planted so many years ago. Do you see the "00" in the lower left corner? That means this Sugar Maple is one of the first trees planted; more than 100 years ago!

Remember: All trees and bushes are alive! Do not tear or take with you parts of any plant EVER. Share what you see, not what you have removed from the plants.

Seasonal Highlights

We invite you to visit every season!

Early Spring – See the last snow melting in the cold sun and smell the fragrance of Daphne. The explosions of Yellow Witch Hazel and early Dogwood are easy to detect, but there are trees and shrubs of startling greens and pinks as buds and blooms begin to burst.

April & May – These months the best due to our collection of deciduous trees. It’s now a bit busier with flowers! Do you see how the daffodils have spread and colonized the expanses of grass? Spring is now upon us. Take a walk along Garden Springs Creek, beyond the “Touch and See Nature Trail,” where you will see how the daffodils have spread and colonized into a river of yellow.

June–August – The trees now do their best, silent work. It has been shown that temperature in the shade of trees can be 10° to 15° cooler; they catch dust and particles on their leaves and create oxygen; they shelter and feed wildlife; and lastly, they reduce noise. These features make the expansive arboretum lawn a perfect picnic spot under the trees at the end of a hot day!

Fall – The arboretum now blazes and sparkles! Everyone comes to the Fall Leaf Festival! The Mountain Ash, Maple and Oak trees are the most well-known for their berries and leaf colors. The artistry of these fall colors create incredible photographs and backdrop for beautiful wedding events.
This narrative description follows the numbers on the map, and will lead you through some of the Arboretum’s major collections and specimens of interest.

Directly west of the main parking lot are several varieties of Beech. An elegant example is the WEEPING EUROPEAN BEECH 18. The Beech collection is distributed throughout the FLOWERING SHRUB BEDS.

The FLOWERING SHRUB BEDS are planted according to genus and provide blooms throughout Spring and Summer. In the midst of the beds stands a magnificent WHITE WILLOW 3 that predates the Arboretum. Other willows are located along Garden Springs Creek which flows west to east through the Arboretum. The creek runs year-round and is part of the Latah Creek watershed. A great deal of care is taken to preserve the integrity of this watercourse.

Adjacent to the WHITE WILLOW is the LILAC COLLECTION 1 with over 80 named varieties. This tribute to Spokane, the “Lilac City”, has been recognized by the International Lilac Society.

South of the EUROPEAN 4 and TRI-COLOR BEECHES 5 is the ELM COLLECTION. The spring blooming MAGNOLIA COLLECTION 6 is north of the Beech trees. Magnolias are admired for their color and the size of their blossoms. Ahead are the BEAUTY BUSH and the LINDEN COLLECTION 11.

The YEW COLLECTION 19 begins at the top of the hill. Yews are conifers which bear fleshy, seeded fruit rather than cones. The expanding OAK COLLECTION contains some of the Arboretum’s most majestic trees. The classic bold, angular Oak branch pattern on a stocky trunk is best displayed by the ENGLISH OAK 16. Closer to the creek is the FRAGRANT MOCK ORANGE COLLECTION 12.

The name “DOGWOOD” applies to many different size trees, shrubs and plants as seen in the DOGWOOD COLLECTION 13. Containing Butternut, English and Black Walnuts, the NUT STANDARD COLLECTION 20 provides shade. The LIQUIDAMBAR 23 is a conifer with leaves that predates the Arboretum. Other willows are located along Garden Springs Creek which flows west to east through the Arboretum. The creek runs year-round and is part of the Latah Creek watershed. A great deal of care is taken to preserve the integrity of this watercourse.

There are over 70 varieties of flowering CRABAPPLE in the COLLECTION 14 with colors ranging from pure white to deep magenta. The fall fruit display is noteworthy and provides wildlife food during winter months.

HAWTHORNS 17 are admired for their fragrant blossoms and abundant fruit. These specimens are armed with sharp thorns, though thornless varieties exist. Arranged between basalt rock outcrops is the COTONEASTER COLLECTION 2. Cotoneaster is at home on dry, sunny slopes.

A stately BLUE SPRUCE 18 on the hillside marks the beginning of the SPRUCE COLLECTION. There are many variations of form and color in Spruce.

Firs have been called balsams for many years due to the scented resin they produce. The FIR COLLECTION 21 has many fine specimens.

For Fall color there is no comparison to the MAPLE COLLECTION 22. Sugars in the mature leaves combined with the effects of cooler weather conditions and less sunlight cause the change of color.

The PINE COLLECTION has several specimens of special interest including the BRISTLECONE PINE 23 named for the prickles at the edge of each cone scale. Two different forms of Eastern White Pine are displayed; DWARF 24 and STANDARD 25. Some of the Arboretum’s tallest trees are the PONDEROSA PINE 26, sometimes referred to as yellow pine.

The KATSURA 27 comes into view. Heart-shaped leaves give the Katsura a graceful appearance. The ASH COLLECTION 28 provides shade. The LIQUIDAMBAR 29 or SWEETGUM TREE has distinctive ridged and corky bark.

This concludes the self-guided walking tour. You could continue to the Street Tree Exhibit located across Woodland Boulevard on the north bank of the creek. The Street Tree Exhibit begins at the intersection of Woodland Boulevard and “F” Street.

After crossing the iron railed bridge the KATSURA COLLECTION 33 comes into view. Heart-shaped leaves give the Katsura a graceful appearance. The ASH COLLECTION 32 provides shade. The LIQUIDAMBAR 30 or SWEETGUM TREE has distinctive ridged and corky bark.

This concludes the self-guided walking tour. You could continue to the Street Tree Exhibit located across Woodland Boulevard on the north bank of the creek. The Street Tree Exhibit begins at the intersection of Woodland Boulevard and “F” Street.