

Leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*)

Origin: Native.

Status in Park: The plant is common in the park in moist lowland woods and on the wooded slopes of the northeast side of Spring Creek.

Characteristics: A shrub that reaches 4-6 feet tall, up to 4 inches in diameter; bark is wrinkled and grayish brown low on the lower plant, becoming smooth and browner higher up; flowers tiny, yellow, drooping, have no petals, and appear in early to mid-spring, before the leaves emerge; fruits one-seeded and fleshy, about a half inch in size, developing from the flowers and are red when they mature in late spring.

Leaves: Alternate, simple; 2-4 inches long; margins are smooth; upper surface is yellowish green to medium green and hairless, beneath is whitish green and also hairless.



Location of tagged shrub:



Notes: While native, the species is uncommon to rare in much of Illinois and occurs in scattered areas. Spring Creek is very fortunate to have so many of these plants. The twigs and upper stems are extremely flexible and can actually be tied in knots. The fruits are eaten by birds and small mammals.