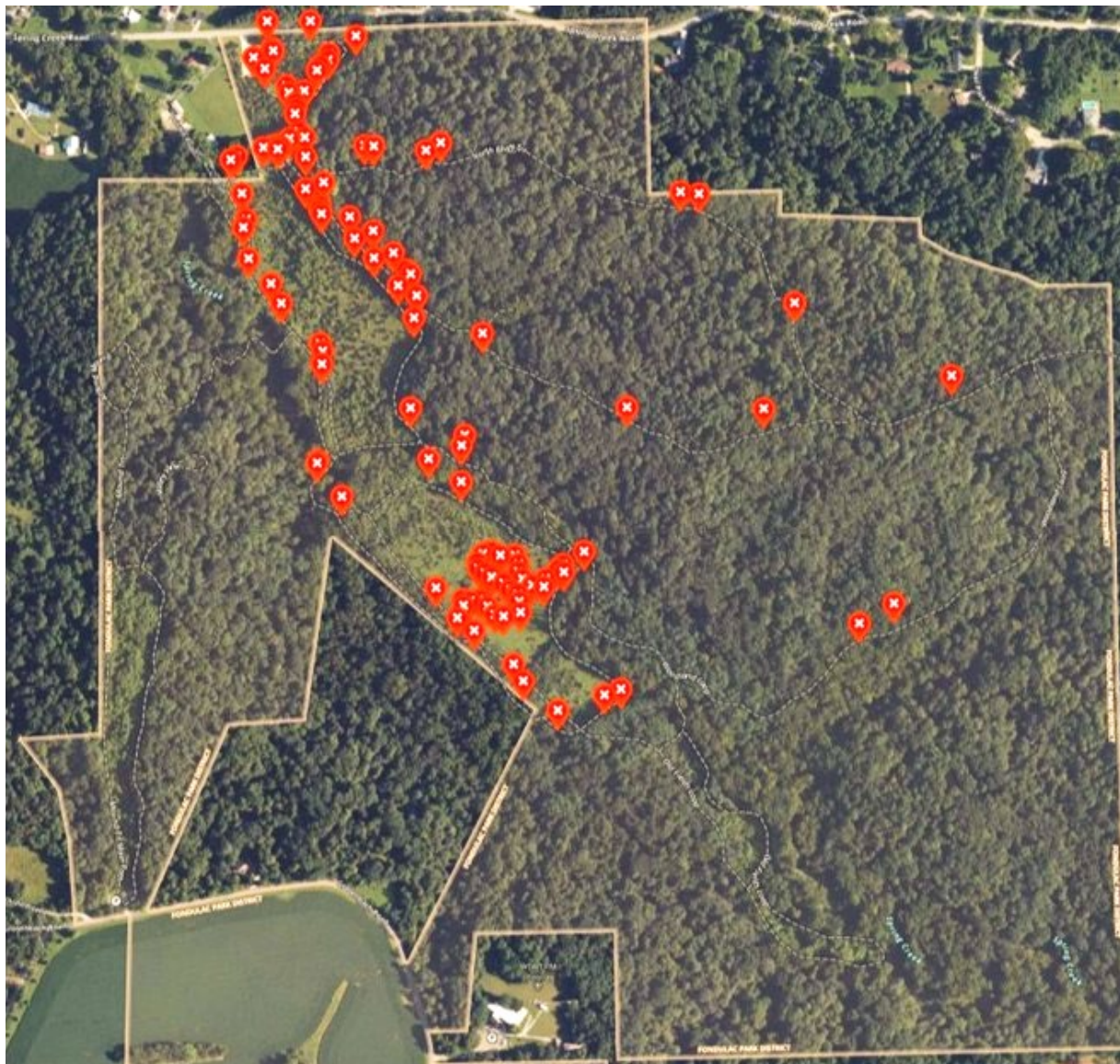


Overview of Tree Identification at Spring Creek

The Spring Creek Preserve is especially rich in plant species. To help visitors recognize the various trees, shrubs, and woody vines, the park district has labeled examples. So far, 112 plants, representing 62 species, have been tagged. As shown on the map below, these are along the Old Fields Loop (Fields A and B), the North Bluff Trail, the Woodland Loop, and near the main parking lot. Tag locations are marked with orange paint for visibility. Most marked trees have low, clearly visible leaves. But mature trees were also included to demonstrate the considerable size that some species can attain. Some kinds of trees that often occur in Central Illinois were curiously absent from the park, but Mike McGraw donated specimens of 8 of these, now planted along the McGraw Tree Trail.



The Spring Creek Preserve was created from a number of parcels of land over the years. The first was acquired in 1964 and the last in 2003. The largest property was added in 2002 and contained what are now Fields A, B, and C. Before 2002 these were agricultural fields and produced corn and soy beans. The park district is allowing the fields to return to forest now and explains the smaller size of trees and a different mix of species in this part of the park.

On this webpage the tagged species are listed in alphabetical order by common name. Each name is linked to a descriptive paragraph about the species, including a leaf photo and map of where the tagged trees are located in the park.

The species descriptions use these four terms for abundance in the park:

Abundant: The species is found in all parts of the park, usually in large numbers.

Widespread: The species is quite common and easy to find, but often in particular areas or habitats.

Occasional: There are relatively small numbers of the species in the park and are harder to find.

Rare: Only one or two or just a handful of the plants are present in the park.

Leaves are crucial in tree identification, and we give some terminology here. The following terms for leaf types are used in the species descriptions:

Simple: A single leaf blade is attached to a twig.

Pinnately compound: The leaf is composed of leaflets that are arranged in rows on either side of the central stem.

Palmetely compound: The leaf has three or more leaflets, attached at a central point.

Doubly compound: The pinnately compound leaf has leaflets that are, in turn, pinnately compound.



Simple

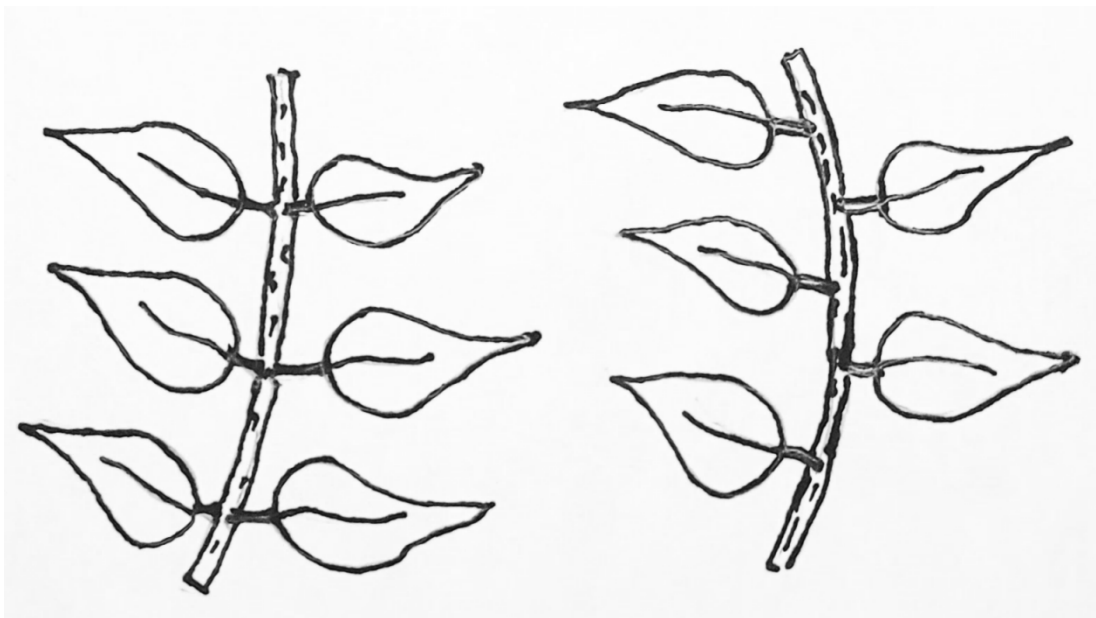
Compound
Pinnately Palmately

Doubly compound

Also important are terms for the arrangement of leaves on a twig:

Opposite: The leaves are directly across from each other on the twig.

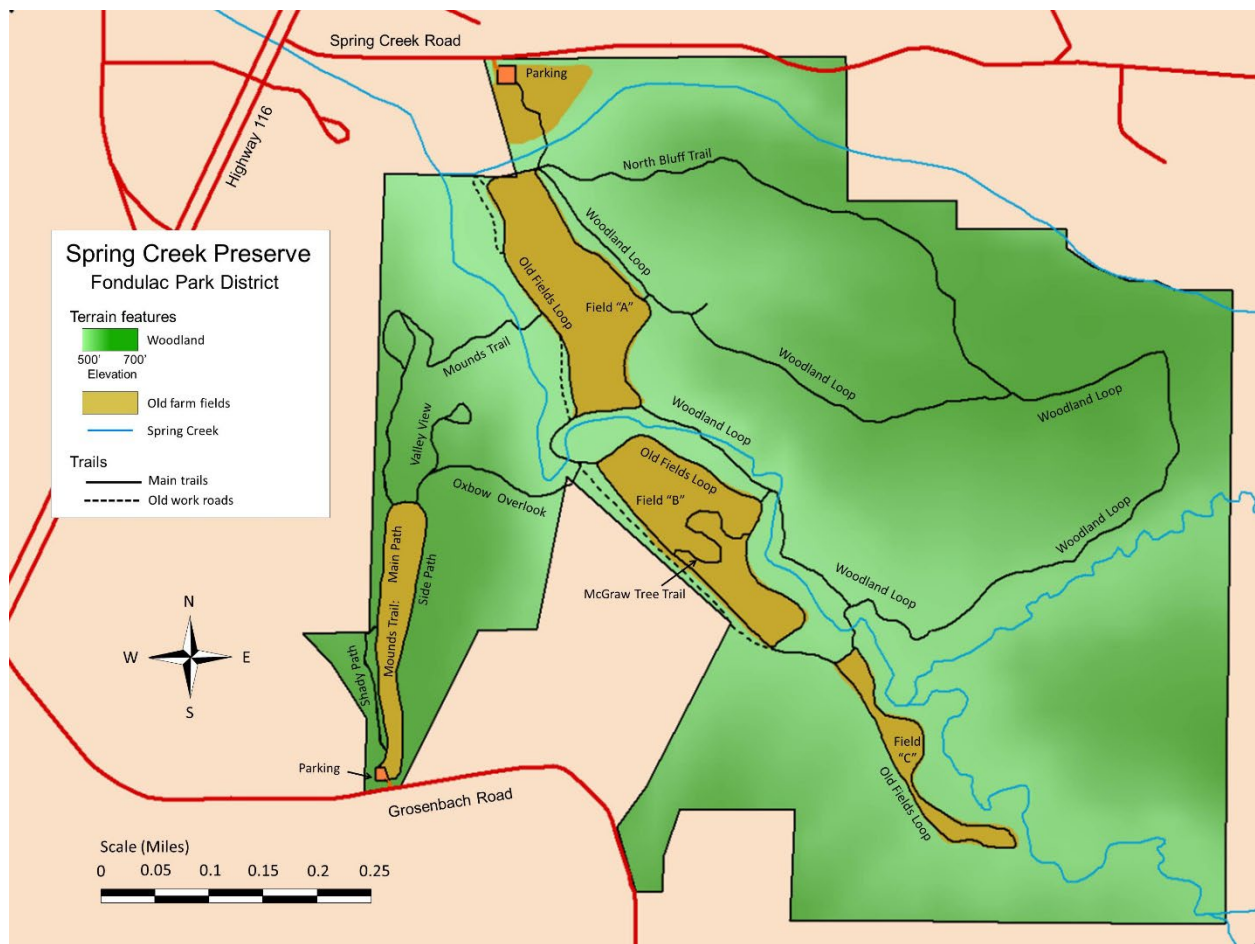
Alternate: The leaves are staggered along the twig.



Opposite

Alternate

For reference, the trail map of the park is included below. The trails and names are also shown on the tree-location maps but may be indistinct.



Two references that have been extremely important for our project are given here. They provide excellent information about the tree species in our area and the botanical terms used to describe them:

Forest Trees of Illinois, 2009, Jay C. Hayck (ed.), Illinois Extension, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Trees of Illinois, 2007, Linda Kershaw, Lone Pine Publishing International.

We hope that your visits to the park will be fun and educational!