

Explore the Diversity of the Living Collection

Bark for all Seasons

1. Starting at the Centre Street Gate, the first plant on your right is *Heptacodium miconioides* (seven-son flower). Its tan outer bark peels in narrow, paper-like strips and thin sheets to reveal an attractive mocha-colored inner bark. The pale bark of seven-son flower is an eye-catching departure from the dark brown bark typical of many trees in winter.



2. *Stewartia pseudocamellia* (Japanese stewartia) is just beyond as you continue away from the gate. This Asian native has lovely flowers and fantastic fall foliage, but perhaps best of all is its year-round, exfoliating bark. The bark peels off from the trunk like very thin tissue, resulting in a camouflage effect. Stewartia's exposed inner bark emerges as free-form shapes, in shades of warm grey, rose, buff, light green, and cream.



3. Members of the Platanus family (Platanaceae), including *Platanus occidentalis* (sycamore or American planetree) and *Platanus x acerifolia* (London planetree), are to your left. Like fingerprints or snowflakes, every plane tree has its own distinctive bark patterns. In winter the bark seems to shine, as the smooth trunks exhibit a range of colors from cream and tan to olive. A particular standout is *Platanus x acerifolia* 'Suttneri' (cultivar of London planetree). Look for it a little way down Oak Path—'Suttneri' is a beacon with its exceptionally pale, almost white, bark.



4. Many trees in the *Betula* (birch) genus are recognized for their striking bark. *Betula nigra* (river birch) is a native with exfoliating bark. Layers curl and peel revealing patches of cream, rust, and gray. As river birches mature, their main trunks become mostly dark gray and brown, no longer peeling or colorful. Even so, the mature bark develops an interesting rough texture with vertical furrows, while younger growth displays the prized colors and peeling bark.

5. Our native *Diospyrus virginiana* (common persimmon) exhibits yet another type of bark, made up of pronounced scale-like squares. Several of these trees are between Bussey Hill Road and Meadow Road near the pond. The small, irregularly shaped blocks are divided by furrows, resulting in a striking appearance of hundreds of squares and rectangles. Colors of gray, black, and rust emerge through this rough, textured bark.



6. The genus *Prunus* (cherry) offers particularly interesting and attractive bark that is dotted with lenticels. Lenticels are tiny holes in the bark that allow gases, especially oxygen, to move between the internal tissues and the air. They are slightly raised and horizontal, looking like blisters. One of the cherries in the Bradley Rosaceous Collection worth a close look is *Prunus incisa* f. *serrata* (form of Fuji cherry) with rich-gray, burnished bark accented by networks of lenticels.



7. In the maple collection look for *Acer griseum* (paperbark maple). Once the leaves have fallen the paperbark maple's bark is visible from Meadow Road, even though the tree is far back near Willow Path. Its rich cinnamon, orange, and brown bark stands out from the other maples. The bark exfoliates in thin, paper-like sections, curling away from the surface. Originally from central China, the Arnold Arboretum specimens here and in the Explorers Garden are the largest and oldest in the United States.

8. Follow Meadow Road to *Acer saccharinum* (silver maple). Long, loose strips of bark pull away from the surface of the trunk. As these vertical pieces lift off, a warm gold surface is revealed beneath the silver-gray. This pattern covers the main trunk as well as the mature branches.

