

MOBILE BAY

New Mobile Tree Trail: Sharing the love for Mobile's Nature and Past

Downtown Mobile's Updated Tree Trail

By **Talitha Buettel** - March 26, 2024





Whenever a visitor drives through Mobile, their first response might be, “Look at all the trees!” It is true that Mobile is an impressively green city, but not without the efforts of organizations like The Nature Conservancy and The Mobile Tree Commission.

In the early 1990s, a dedicated group of volunteers decided to establish the first Mobile Tree Trail. This original trail included 24 trees, which have since been changed in the new trail to the 15 trees that best represent our beautiful and diverse city. This is the only trail of its kind in the entire country! This trail not only takes you through the city’s



beautiful sites but also reflects on its rich past. From southern staples to local legends, there is no better way to soak up the city's long history and natural beauty. If you are looking to see these for yourself, put on your best walking shoes, grab some friends, and spend the day soaking up the views.



Bienville Oaks

Bienville Square

In 1847, Mayor J.W.L Childers began planting live oaks in Bienville Square – 39 years before it was dedicated to the memory of Jean Baptiste LeMoyne, Sieur de Bienville, the founder of Mobile. In 1890, citizens defeated a movement to have the oaks taken out of the square and the Live Oak has since become a symbol of the south – and Mobile. The trees, like Mobile's citizens, have weathered many hurricanes and stand as a testament to the city's commitment to its natural landscape.



Date Palm

Corner of Claiborne and Church Streets

This palm dates back at least 150 years and it can even be seen in a painting of the original building. The Date palm was once common throughout Mobile. It can grow up to 30 meters tall and its sweet fruits are often enjoyed as desserts.





Junior Miss Maples

*South Claiborne Street at Auditorium Drive,
beside Municipal Theater*

Past Junior Miss contestants donated money to the city in an effort to help re-plant following the devastation of Hurricane Frederic in 1979. The Tree Commission purchased 28 red maples with the donation and the grove was dedicated to the Junior Misses in January of 1982. The maples have green leaves in the spring which turn bright red in the fall. Also, these trees produce a bright red samara fruit in the spring.



Boyington Oak

South Bayou Street between Government and Church Streets

One of Mobile's most famous trees – and folk stories. In 1835, Charles Boyington was unjustly hanged for a friend's murder. Before he was to be hanged, he said, "I'm innocent, but what can I do? From my grave shall grow a tree of many branches, and it will prove my innocence!" Years later, when the true murderer confessed, the oak tree had already begun to grow.





Southern magnolia

South Bayou Street between Government and Church Streets

Just beside Boyington Oak are the beautiful Magnolias. This tree is a magnificent specimen with an unusual, distinguishing trunk. The magnolia produces a strong, heady wax-like blossom in the summer. The large, leathery green leaves accent the white flowers.



Washington Square Oaks

Washington Square

Today, Washington Square is a center of neighborhood activities. In 1850 it was deeded to the city for use as a public area. The beautiful live oaks, flowers, and shrubbery have provided enjoyment to Mobilians for over 100 years.





Sweetgum

Corner of Selma and Rapier Streets

The name sweetgum comes from the sap which exudes from the trees because hardened clumps of this sap are chewed by some people. The tree has distinctive star-shaped leaves which turn red in the fall. Also be sure to watch your step for the spikey balls this tree will cover the ground with.



Government Street Oaks

Government Street

This nationally recognized street is lined with live oaks which are the result of generations of planting. When the British occupied Mobile from 1736 – 1780, they named the street Government Street and planted many oaks. Most of the trees planted by the British were chopped down during the Civil War to prevent Union soldiers from slipping unseen into the city. After the war, Mobilians began replanting the oaks in front of their homes to beautify the city and provide shade. The acorns are small but edible and the trees are evergreen.





Duffie Oak

1123 Caroline Avenue

This live oak is Mobile's oldest living resident and was alive when our country was born. The tree boasts a 25-foot circumference, a crown spread of 120 feet, and a total height of 50 feet. The oak was named in 1878 for Mobile's mayor, George C. Duffie. The Duffie Oak received some unusual notoriety as the result of a city ordinance designed to protect the tree's low reaching limbs.



Swamp Chestnut Oak

Fernway Street

This oak, which turns a spectacular red color in the fall, is useful as a shade tree. It is sometimes known as a basket oak for the baskets that were traditionally made from its wood. The acorns are sweet and favored by wildlife. Benches and a calming fountain make this a great place to stop, take a break, and take it in.





Sabal Palmetto

New Hamilton and Monterrey Streets

This cabbage palm derives its common name from the fact that the leaf bud or “heart” at the top of the trunk is an edible delicacy with a fine cabbage flavor when cooked in the same manner as the vegetable. Palmetto trees once dominated the Mobile landscape.



Ginkgo

Spring Hill Avenue and Margaret Street

The ginkgo was cultivated for centuries in the temple gardens of Japan and China. The ginkgo is also known as the golden fossil tree because the leaves turn a brilliant yellow in the fall. The word ginkgo actually means “duck’s foot” presumably because the ginkgo’s leaves resemble a duck’s webbed foot. The leaves will fall within one day or overnight when the first frost hits and it is considered good luck if you can catch a falling leaf in mid-air. Make sure you park on the north side of Springhill for this one if you want to avoid crossing the busy street.





Eastern Red Cedar

South Street

The dense branches of the Eastern red cedar provide an important refuge and shelter for songbirds and game birds, butterflies, and small mammals. The heartwood is notably rot-resistant and was used by early settlers of Mobile to build fences, poles, and furniture.



Longleaf Pine

Corner of Clearmont and South Streets

The longleaf pine ecosystem was once the most extensive in North America, covering 90 million acres. The forest system itself is now endangered, along with plants like the whitetop pitcher plant which are unique to Alabama and dependent on the longleaf ecosystem.



The trail also includes a few bonus trees that are a further drive from downtown for those looking for more of an adventure, so be sure to check out the Mobile Tree Trail Commission Facebook to find them all!

Information is courtesy of The Nature Conservancy and The Mobile Tree Trail Commission.





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