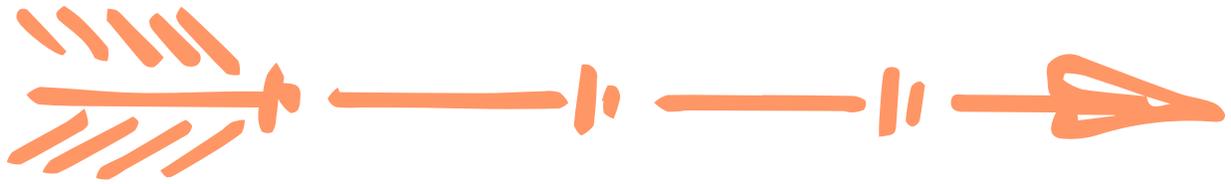
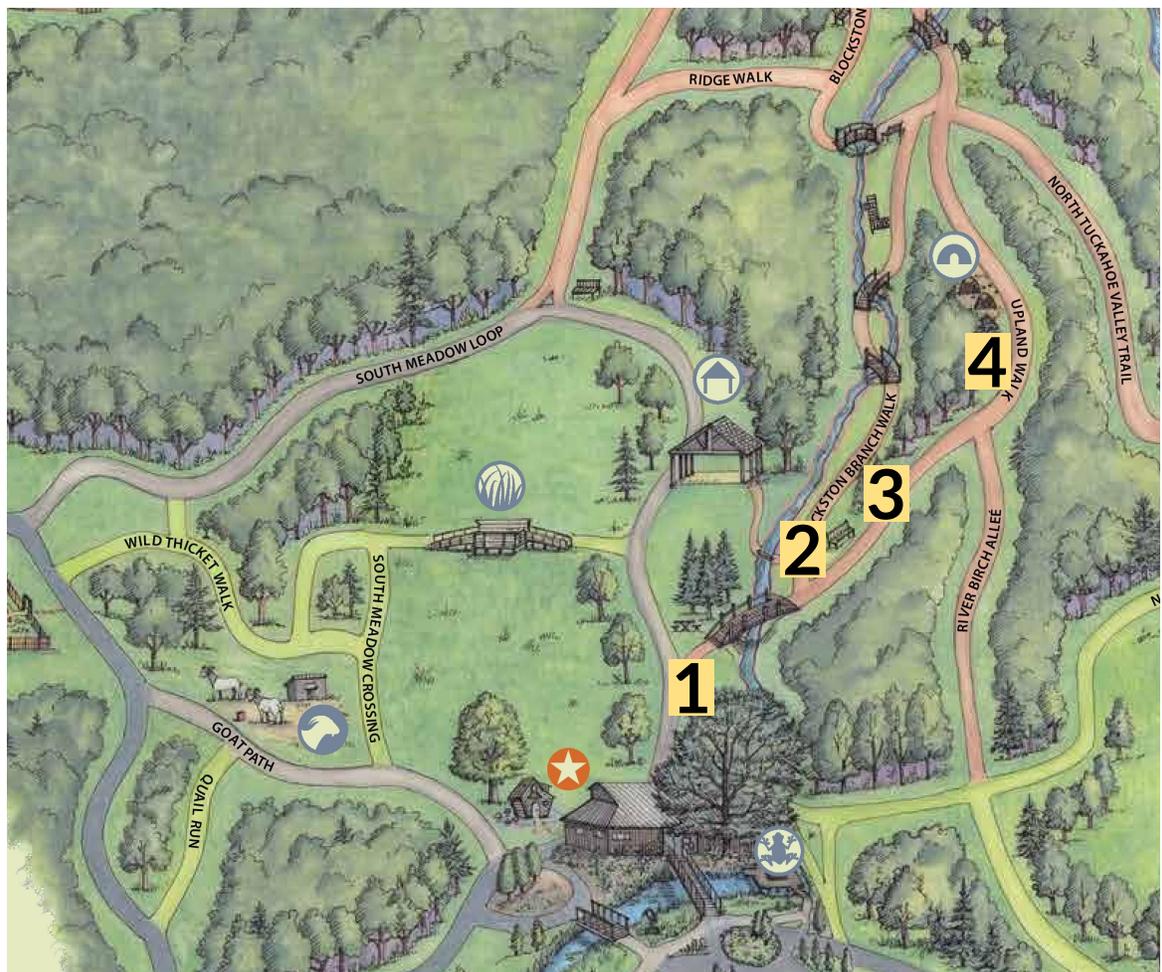


Native Plants, Native People Forest Walk



Native Americans have lived in the Chesapeake Bay region since the last polar ice age, over 10,000 years ago. Before European settlers arrived in the 1600s, Indigenous peoples relied on native plants and animals for food, shelter, clothing, tools, and medicine. On your walk today, you'll explore a forest that is much younger than when the Woodland Indians made their homes here. Along the way, you'll stop to learn more about some of the plants that were important to them.

Start behind the Visitor's Center to begin your walk. The numbers are your guide for where to stop.



ADKINS ARBORETUM



MARYLAND
HUMANITIES

1 Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)



Can you spy persimmons among the branches? In late fall, you may taste one! Look for fruit that is orange and soft.

The name “persimmon” comes from the Algonquin Indians and means “dried fruit.” Persimmon fruits change from green to orange and are very bitter until they fully ripen in late fall. Native Americans ate the fruit raw, cooked, or dried like fruit and baked into puddings and breads. The inner bark of the tree was used to treat many ailments, including sore throats, fever, and stomach upset. Native Americans also used the hard, flat seeds to play dice-like games!

2 Paw Paw (*Asimina triloba*)

Paw Paws are members of the custard-apple family. Most species in this family are tropical—scientists believe that the presence of paw paws in North America is the result of extinct animals spreading the seed through their droppings. Native Americans expanded the tree’s range by planting them. The scientific name for paw paw, *asimina*, comes from the Powhatan language.



Paw paw fruit ripens in the fall. Native Americans ate the sweet, custardy fruit raw, mashed, or dried into cakes. The Cherokee tribe made rope and string from paw paw bark, and some tribes used the ground seeds to deter head lice.



Sketch a paw paw leaf. How large is the leaf? Describe its shape. Does it remind you of tropical leaves?

3 Oak (*Quercus*)



ADKINS ARBORETUM



Adkins Arboretum is home to several species of oak. Oaks were symbols of strength and courage to Native Americans and one of their most important and versatile resources. Individual oaks that were especially large and old were considered sacred and were used as gathering places for spiritual ceremonies and tribal councils.

Oak saplings and branches were used to build wigwams and sleeping platforms; wood was also carved into bows, awls, tool handles, basket frames, and mortars for pounding corn. The bark was used to treat insect bites, wounds, sore muscles, sore throats, coughs, diarrhea, and—if you were an Iroquois Indian—even loneliness! Tannin in the bark was used to cure leather and as a dye.

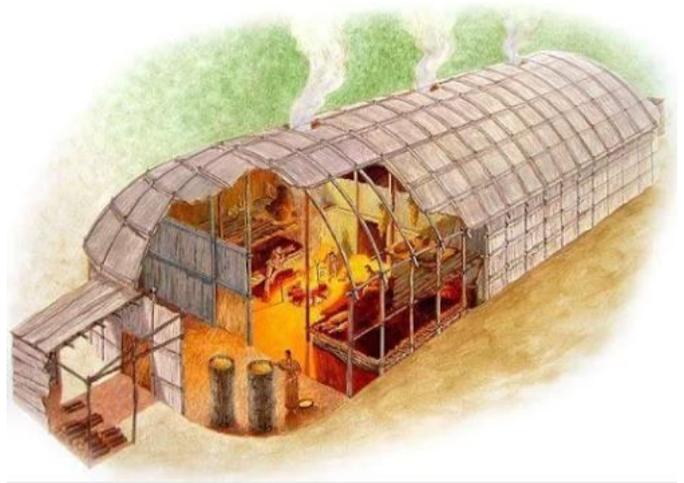


Acorns were rivaled only by the chestnut as a food source for many Native Americans. The acorns were dried in their shells, then ground into flour. Before the flour could be eaten, the bitter tannin had to be removed by repeated soaking in water. The acorn flour was baked into bread or used in other tasty dishes.

Look for acorns on the forest floor to compare and contrast. The acorns of different oak species vary in size and even shape. Do you see any signs of insect damage to your acorns?

4 At Home in the Forest

The Choptank People of the Eastern Shore lived in wigwams or longhouses. Wigwams were comfortable circular dwellings inhabited by one family. Longhouses were long, cigar-shaped dwellings for multiple families. Each family had its own smoke hole, beds, mats, shelves, and other personal items.



Both wigwams and longhouses were constructed from a framework of green saplings. The young, green wood could be bent into arches and lashed together with cords made from plant fiber. Men would place the saplings into holes dug or punched into the ground. The wooden framework was covered with animal hide, cattail mats, and bark. Spaces were left for doorways. The doors and smoke holes had adjustable mats to keep out wind and water, seal in warmth, and let out smoke.



Step inside one of the Arboretum's wigwams. Close your eyes and imagine sleeping on animal hides along with your parents, siblings, and maybe even a grandparent. A small fire would burn in the center of the wigwam to warm you. What forest sounds might you have heard in the night? Gather small sticks and leaves to make a model wigwam along the forest edge. Be sure to look for poison ivy first!

