



## Lake Bluff's Witness Tree Quest

Sponsored by Growing Native Habitat Lake Bluff

For the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, a group of community members is organizing a special event. Most of the North Shore suburbs of Chicago were heavily logged in the 1800s, but Lake Bluff was not. We are lucky to live among trees that have stood here for centuries.

Today, many of our trees face threats from disease and unnecessary removal. We would like to find our oldest trees, protect them, and appreciate the history that they have witnessed. We have already found one tree that is close to 300 years old. Can we find more? It can also be fun to estimate the ages of trees near us, even when not quite that old. Our method will work for that as well.

### Where to Look and What to Seek

Our oldest trees are all native species that grew naturally here. The diameter of a tree's trunk indicates the number of years it has grown. To participate in the Quest, look anywhere within Lake Bluff's School District 65, on both private and public land, for a native tree that has a larger-than-expected trunk.

Lake Bluff was an oak and hickory forest before settlement. Because oaks can live for many centuries, they may be our oldest trees, but we will also look for the oldest of the many species native to our area.

### How to Record Your Tree

Forms and detailed instructions will be available at the Village Hall, the Lake Bluff Library, the History Museum, the Park District, the little free library in Artesian Park, at the Farmer's Market, and online at [www.growingnativehabitatlb.org/witness-tree-quest](http://www.growingnativehabitatlb.org/witness-tree-quest). (QR code below.) Questions may also be sent to us at: [growingnativegardenslb@gmail.com](mailto:growingnativegardenslb@gmail.com).

The first step will be to identify the species, then measure the trunk circumference, in inches, at a height of 4.5 feet. From the circumference, the diameter will be computed and multiplied by the provided growth factor for the species to give an estimate of the tree's age. All of this information will be recorded on the entry form, including the location of the tree, and the form will be returned to Village Hall, the Library, the Park District or submitted by email to [growingnativegardenslb@gmail.com](mailto:growingnativegardenslb@gmail.com).

The Quest team will record the entries and map their locations. The results will be shared with the community and our oldest trees will receive special recognition. Tips for caring for our trees to help them live for many more years will also be provided.

**Dates for the Quest: May 1 to September 30, 2026**

In 2027, we will nominate our largest trees for inclusion on the Illinois Big Tree Register.

