



Tree Walk



Wivenhoe Park
John Constable



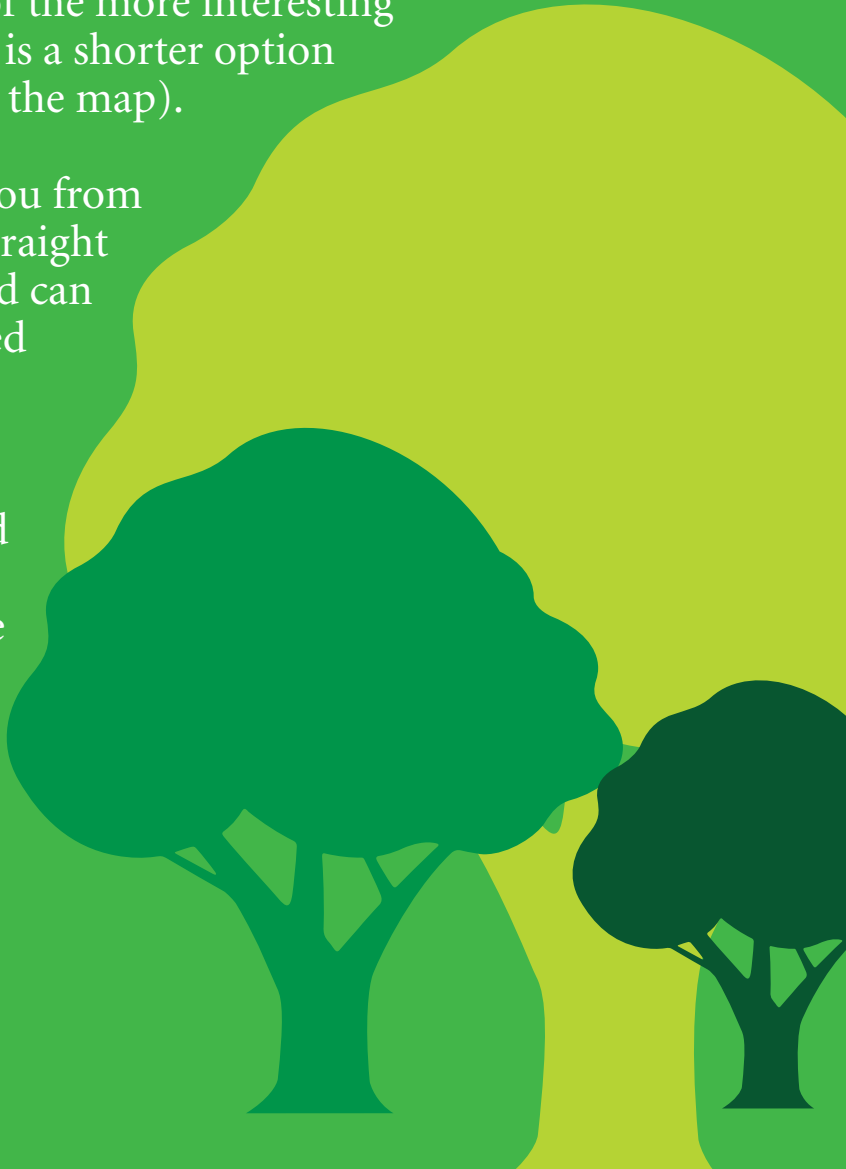
A pleasant walk around parts of the campus and Wivenhoe Park highlighting some of our notable trees

Christopher Howard

University of Essex Tree Walk

The route of this self-guided walk starts at the end of Square 5. It covers part of the original parkland and will take you about an hour, or longer if you linger over some of the more interesting trees. There is a shorter option (marked on the map).

This takes you from tree No.2, straight to No.16 and can be completed in about 40 minutes. A tree index, glossary and map can be found at the end of this guide.



Enjoy your walk.

Take the path that leaves Square 5 with the Lakeside Theatre on your left; it curves gently around to the right with the glass and steel Ivor Crewe building over to your right, and on your left a dip in the ground that was formerly known as the Elysian Grove. This earlier parkland feature was likely to have been a cool leafy glade. Part of the man-made dip remains, but the trees are now different.

The area contains some interesting trees including two different Ashes growing on either side of a Silver Birch (recognisable by its white bark)

The first of the two, on your left, is **(1) the Narrow-leaved Ash** (*Fraxinus angustifolia*). Its compound leaves form a quite delicate foliage with smaller leaflets than other Ashes which seem to merge into 'clouds'. Look up through the leaves to appreciate how fine and feathery they are.

Moving along the path, the next tree, on the far side of the Silver Birch, is **(2) the Common Ash** (*Fraxinus excelsior*).

This is the last of our native trees into leaf. Like the first Ash, the leaves have leaflets that are pinnate, in opposite pairs. It is also one of the first to drop its leaves. The timber is often used for traditional tool handles. It's also much valued as fuel, as the wood burns very well, even when green. It is a common woodland and hedgerow tree. It has winged fruits in the form of single wings known as 'keys' and they are often seen hanging in large bunches late into the autumn.

(To follow the shorter route at this point, follow the line indicated on the map to tree No.16 located opposite the front door of Wivenhoe House).

(To follow the longer route, proceed to tree No.3): Crossing the grass and heading uphill to the left of the Ivor Crewe building, and passing on your right a large wooden sculpture, you will see the first of the campus sign points with their distinctive red cubes on the top. Turn right at the one marked VALLEY, following the path down a slope at the back of the Ivor Crewe building as indicated on the map.

After a few metres, on your left, near the metal triangle sculpture, you come to the first of eight different and varied species of Oak on the Walk. This is **(3) the Turkey Oak** (*Quercus cerris*). You will recognise the leaf as 'Oak-like' (lobed) but varied in shape and size.

The acorns are fascinating and quite distinctive; the cups are sometimes described as mossy because they are very heavily whiskered.

Continue on the path, go down a few steps and turn left at the LECTURE THEATRE sign. Follow this path uphill until you notice a white signboard on the right of the path telling you about the Trim Trail. At this point, to the left of the path is the Trim Trail exercise area, and a fine **(4) English Oak** (*Quercus robur*). At over 27 metres high it is the tallest Oak on the campus, though they can grow much taller. Everyone's friend, the English Oak supplies us with excellent timber and provides a free lunch for more leaf-eating insects than any other tree in Britain. Perhaps that's because a large mature tree like this one can have about a quarter of a million leaves! It will be easy for you to remember these leaves for comparison with those of the other Oak species that you see on the walk. While these represent only a tiny proportion of the 500 or so that can be found world wide, they nonetheless display a wide variation in their leaves and general appearance.



4 Campus Walk

After this tree head up the path with the hard tennis courts on your left and the red brick Sports Centre on your right, and then two benches on your left.

Stay on this path until you reach a TENNIS COURTS sign. Here you turn right and keep walking towards Boundary Road until you come to the area which was a Pinetum in earlier days. You cannot fail to notice a strikingly tall tree here, a good example of (5) the **Corsican Pine** (*Pinus nigra ssp. laricio*). There are still a number of various conifers in this area but many were lost in the storm of 1987. These have been partially replaced by younger mixed trees and saplings.

By looking at the map you will see that tree No.6 lies parallel to Boundary Road, after crossing Park Road. The safest way to do this is to use the crossing indicated on the map and follow the path back to Boundary Road.

You will now pass along a pleasant avenue of trees beside Boundary Road with views on your left towards Wivenhoe House. You eventually come to a point with two green bins on your left. Leave the path and move ahead on to the field at about 45 degrees towards (6) the **Chestnut-leaved Oak** (*Quercus castaneifolia*), a young tree with a square wire cage at its base and quite an open form. Seeing the leaf on this young tree helps you to appreciate the diversity of Oaks. These leaves have lobes but they are small, quite regular and triangular; so different from the Turkey and English Oaks that you saw earlier. There are more Oak surprises later on the tour.

Go back to the path and continue. Just before it ends you will notice a couple of (7) **Portugal Laurels** (*Prunus lusitanica*). These are large bushy evergreens with deep green glossy leaves that set off the bright creamy-white tails of flowers very well in late spring/early summer. The flowers have a

pleasant fragrance and are followed by bitter-tasting deep purple berries.

Leave the path at this point and cross the Sports Field towards the chimneys of Wivenhoe House. If the field is in use follow the boundary until you pick up the fence line around the copse area. Towards the end of the fence line there is a pedestrian gate that lets you into the grounds that surround the back of the House and its various buildings. Keeping the long black wooden buildings to your right, move towards the clock tower and the conical tree ahead.

This is (8) a **Dawn Redwood** (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*). A deciduous conifer originally from China where fossil records were known but the tree itself was thought extinct. It was re-discovered and introduced into Britain in 1948. Having a very neat shape and form with soft green foliage turning rust colour in the autumn, it has become popular in parkland planting, but it can develop into quite a large tree.



Moving along the back of the main buildings with the black wooden one on your right, follow the roadway right towards the Lodge and turn left at the second lamp post to view (9) the **Bhutan Pine** (*Pinus wallichiana*). This often shows a good display of very large cones, the most noticeable hanging near the crown of the tree, but there are also usually a few old open cones on the ground. It has interesting and strangely beautiful male flowers around June time.

As the name suggests the tree originates in the Himalayas. It was introduced into Britain in the early nineteenth century and is an interesting ornamental specimen.

Move down this tree lawn, keeping the road close to your left, towards the next tree (10) the **Western Red Cedar** (*Thuja plicata*). It should be easy to locate, with its unmistakable large and luxuriant green conical foliage all the way to the ground. This tree is Cedar in name alone. It belongs to the family of Cypresses, the same as the more familiar hybrid Leylandii, but it is altogether more handsome and distinctive than its commoner cousin. The foliage when crushed gives off a pineapple-like scent.

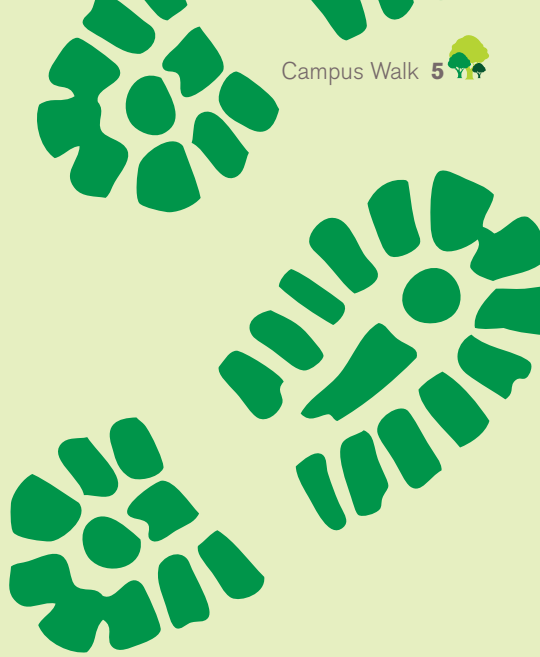
Beyond this there are some very interesting trees. The tall sapling with unusually shaped leaves is (11) a **young Tulip Tree** (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), with markedly snaked bark. It has very distinctive leaves, lobed and ending in a slightly V-shaped notch. The flowers appear in June once the tree reaches the age of about 15/20 years old. They are at their best after a warm spring, when there should be abundant yellow-and-green tulips. They do blend with the foliage rather well, but once you spot one they all seem to appear.

The next tree is nearby, notable for its conical blue form. This is (12) a **Blue Atlas Cedar** (*Cedrus atlantica f. glauca*). Originally from the Atlas Mountains in North Africa it makes a showy ornament to the lawn. Its needles are more silver-grey than blue and set in little 'bunches' or rosettes.

The next tree, a few metres away, is clearly the tallest in this group. It is (13) a **Wellingtonia** or the Giant Redwood (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*). With very reddish-brown bark, this specimen should grow even larger. The Wellingtonia is believed to be the world's biggest tree (the largest is in the U.S.) The taller it grows the more flared its base will become. This giant is a big useless softy; in timber terms, it has very soft wood indeed, but it looks good. The bark is so soft that Treecreepers have been known to nest in it when occasional holes form naturally.

Beside the Wellingtonia, with its branches touching, is (14) a **Fern-leaved Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Heterophylla'). Note the puzzling variation in the leaves: some are lobed like an oak and others, at the shoot tips, are narrow like a willow - very interesting. If it's a fine day, look up at the blue sky through the early soft green and almost feathery foliage. It's magical.

Stand with the last two trees behind you and to the right of another Wellingtonia you will see (15) a **Douglas Fir** (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), usually with some cones on the ground. Introduced into Britain in the 1820s and often grown in plantations for its timber. The bole





(trunk) is usually very tall and straight – look at this one. The cones show a distinctive feature in their 'snake's tongue' bracts. As you may see particularly in the new cones, it's a very good description.

Now walk back along the roadway towards the Wivenhoe House buildings. Turn right towards the front of the main house, then right again at the 'Humps 50 yds' sign, onto the path.

(This path is the point where the shorter route continues after tree No. 2) The first tree here on your right is **(16) the Large-leaved Lime** (*Tilia platyphyllos*). This specimen has had its crown lopped at some stage and has a lot of sprouting growth from burrs on its bole. The heart-shaped leaves can get to about 15 x 15 cm and often feel sticky because of the 'honeydew' on them that comes from Leaf-aphids.

A few metres along the path you will come to the most magnificent and venerable specimen of **(17) Cedar of Lebanon** (*Cedrus libani*). Every Big House should have one! In its day this would have been a trophy tree viewed in its elegance from the House. The layered plates of foliage give the tree a handsome form, accentuated by the gaps allowing a clear view through its branches. The branches can grow very long and weighty and often break off with age. You will notice the supports here to help prevent that happening to its lower limbs.

Move through the trees towards the tree lawn again (where you were previously) and cross to the 'Spinney' sculpture set in a raised brick bed.

The small tree beside the sculpture shows either interesting flowers or fruit, depending on the season, and is **(18) a Medlar** (*Mespilus*

germanica). Its fruits can be something of an acquired taste, somewhat grainy and best 'blotted', or overripe. They have their followers.

With the sculpture and the Medlar behind you, move a few paces down the slope towards the young tree with a square metal cage at its base. This rare specimen is (19) the **Japanese Chestnut Oak** (*Quercus acutissima*). It's also known as the Sawtooth Oak, and you will see why! If you have taken the longer walk around the parkland, you will have seen earlier tree No. 6, the Chestnut-leaved Oak. The leaves here are not dissimilar, they are large and very glossy with a lighter but dull underside, and each of the lobes sports a forward-pointing bristle up to about 5mm long. It couldn't saw paper, but you can see how it got its common name.

Now move towards a very tall Pine at the far edge of the lawn. With your back to the Pine, in front of you is (20) a large **Locust Tree** (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), also known as the False Acacia. It has rough and coarsely ridged bark and attractive compound leaves with pairs of oval leaflets. It's at its most attractive in June with its hanging spikes of highly scented white flowers; these are said to remind people of the smells of the souk in Morocco. The later seed pods often hang into the winter.

Leaving the lawn behind you, move down to the corner and through a gap. The route crosses a culvert at the end of the lake with the Colchester road on your right, then takes you through some Yews and past a small brick building on your right.

About 30 metres up the path ahead of you and on the right is (21) the **Daimyo Oak** (*Quercus dentata*) with a small cage at its base. Rather a special Oak and rare in Britain but found in a few collections. A relatively small tree but with exceptionally large leaves, some of the largest of any Oak. They can reach 40cm in length; and are quite leathery and noticeably hairy. The species was introduced to Britain in 1830 from S.E. Asia. A Daimyo was a feudal Japanese

lord, a deserving reference for this little arboreal aristocrat.

Carry on up the path ahead about another 30 metres to the large sprawling tree on your right, the (22) **Common Walnut** (*Juglans regia*). This tree has large compound leaves with the leaflets in pairs with the end leaflet being much larger, making it a distinctive feature. Prized for its wood in furniture making, and in some parts, for 'wet' walnuts for pickling. In England, the nuts ripen best after long hot summers; in the warmer parts of France they are used for producing a flavoursome oil.

Opposite the Walnut you will notice some large leaves, which are oval with a heart-shaped base and forward pointing teeth around the edge, coming to a pointed tip. These are the leaves of the only specimen in the park of (23) the **Black Mulberry** (*Morus nigra*). The ripe fruit look like small raspberries. You are advised not to pick them if you want to avoid the lasting stains they make! But they do make delicious jam.

We will not play 'here we go round the Mulberry bush', but rather will continue along the path and bear left at the prominent dead Silver Birch.

Pass on your right a small Blue Atlas Cedar. Bear left at the green waste bin next to a tall Wellingtonia and a few metres further on, on your left, is a tree that confuses many people. This is (24) the **Ash-leaved Maple**, also known as the Box Elder (*Acer negundo*). The tree's very pretty little plumes of flowers appear in March and the unusual leaves follow. They are pinnate, but the leaflets are still recognisable as Maple; just, – what do you think? The fruits confirm the tree as a Maple with strings of the usual pairs of keys.

On your right is another fine conical young Dawn Redwood. The next large tree on the left of the path is (25) a **Deodar** (*Cedrus Deodara*). The tell-tale cone scales can often be seen here around the base of the tree leaving their spire shaped centres, like candles, on the tree.

The next tree immediately ahead on the left is a top performer in the autumn; you must come back for the show! This is yet another of the park's interesting Oaks (26) the **Scarlet Oak** (*Quercus coccinea*), less common than its cousin, the Red Oak, which you will see later. Its leaves are a deeper cut with whiskers on the lobes and these are the most reliably red of the Oaks – best in a long warm autumn.

Continue along the path and you will find the lake alongside on your left.

Facing the lake and standing by the metal structure, the tree on your left (27) is a good example of the **London Plane** (*Platanus x hispanica*). A tough tree, planted a lot in London streets and parks where it can tolerate high pollution levels. Its leaves are Maple-like but it has some distinctive characteristics in bark and fruits. Its bark is noticeably scaly, showing greys, cream and brown, it's sometimes called blotchy.

The fruits become very noticeable in the winter after the leaves fall. These are 3cm balls of hairy seeds, which then break up in the spring.

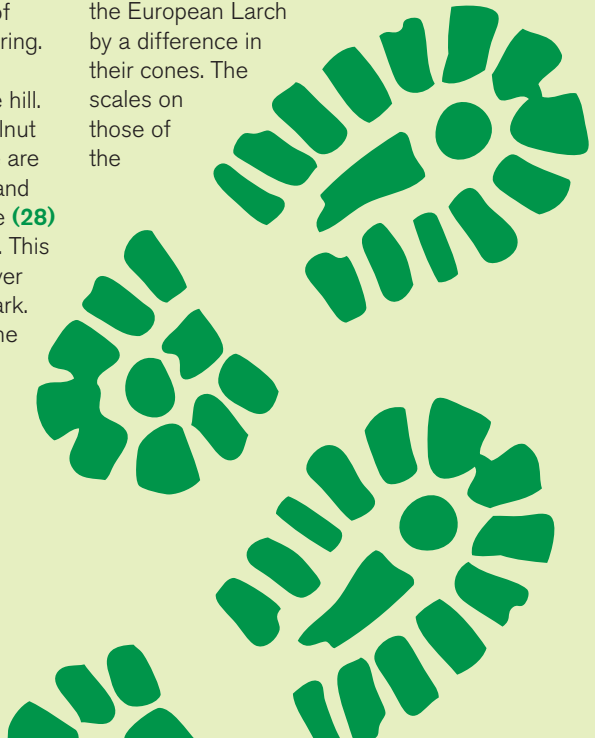
With the lake behind you head up over the hill. At the top of the slope there is a large Walnut tree on your left. At this point, where there are 6 paving slabs set in the grass, turn right and take a slight detour until you are alongside (28) a very large **English Oak** (*Quercus robur*). This magnificent tree is estimated to be well over 300 years old - one of the oldest in the park. You can approach its massive girth from the far side and marvel at the curious craggy features of this silent and mighty sentinel of the English countryside.

Retrace your steps back to the paving slabs and carry on ahead to a left turn, then walk downhill. You pass on your right (29) a huge **Gum** (*Eucalyptus*). This is possibly an old Cider Gum (*E. gunnii*). The huge blue-green cloud of foliage is, incredibly, all from the one tree.

At the end of this path do not follow the causeway between the lakes but instead turn right and walk to the end of the lake. You will arrive at (30) a group of the **Common Alder** (*Alnus glutinosa*). An interesting wetland species, it's very much at home in this setting. The timber is waterproof and has been used for centuries where its characteristics are needed, notably in foundation work for buildings in Venice. Growing near water, these trees usually keep their leaves until quite late.

From the Alders move to the tree with the circular bench around it. This is a perfectly shaped example of (31) the **Turkey Oak** (*Quercus cerris*). The tree is notable for the bench and its location. Their story is explained in a commemorative plaque fixed to the bench.

Standing near the plaque with the tree behind you, you will notice a slightly straggly conifer on your left, slightly ahead. This is (32) the **Japanese Larch** (*Larix kaempferi*), a species distinguished from the European Larch by a difference in their cones. The scales on those of the



Japanese Larch curl back, a little bit like tiny rose petals, whereas those of the European Larch usually remain in a tighter pattern. This particular tree seems to show characteristics of both species and may be a hybrid.

Now head for John Maine's sculpture 'Standing Stone'. From this, head towards the two-sided bench set by the causeway between the lakes.

Once on the causeway, on your right stands **(33)** a row of **Hybrid Black Poplars** (*Populus nigra*). These are an inspired planting here as they provide a high parasol for the barbecue area. The triangular-shaped leaves are on very long petioles, or leaf stalks. These allow the leaves to hang freely and catch any passing breeze, causing them to shimmer and tremble in the wind; could there be a more pleasant spot for a picnic! Stand still for a moment to listen to the rustle; it can be very soothing.

Continuing over the crossing, the last two trees on your left are **(34)** a pair of **Swamp Cypresses** (*Taxodium distichum*). These deciduous conifers, despite their name, also grow quite happily away from water. But they are a wetland tree and particularly well adapted to this habitat. Often where water does not have enough movement, and so has reduced oxygen levels, the tree will develop root extensions, known as 'knees', above ground, or water, to aid its oxygen supply. There are none evident here; our own 'swamp' perhaps being more agreeable!

Turn left and follow the lakeside to a point where, with the lake and a green metal bench behind you, you will notice an interesting **(35)** **Copper Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica* f. *purpurea*). The tree, when in leaf, has an interesting variation in its colouring. The leaves are quite purple at the branch ends nearest the lake. Then as you move under the tree, you will notice the leaves become quite green but with purple veins; this is because of the imbalance of the colouring pigments (xanthocyanins) in the leaves as the season moves on.

Facing the lake, to your right and a little more elevated, you will see the next tree. This is **(36)** the **Coast Redwood** (*Sequoia sempervirens*), tall and very conical. We saw the Giant Redwood (13) earlier. The Coast Redwood is believed to be the world's tallest tree (112m in the U.S.). This one is approaching 20m high and it will take some time for it to achieve that unlikely status. If you look through the needle-like leaves you will see the reddish bark.

Next to this is **(37)**, a beautiful mature specimen of **Red Oak** (*Quercus rubra*). A little neater in appearance than the English Oak, this variety has large leaves looking more cut and pointy than most of the other Oaks you have seen. These go a deep red after long and warm Indian summers. You remember those!

Now head uphill towards Wivenhoe House and through the black iron garden gate to the right of the building and head towards the rear of the garden, which ends with a Ha-Ha. This is the sunken wall which marks the boundary between garden and parkland. It allows a fine uninterrupted view, but don't walk over the edge!

Here are two of the most magnificent **(38)** **Cork Oaks** (*Quercus suber*) that you are ever likely to see. The 'complexion' of their bark may look in need of a little moisturiser. These two large rather recumbent characters are very alive. It is said that they were planted in 1814 by General Francis Rebow, then owner of the estate, as seedlings that he brought back from Lisbon, where he had been taking part in the Peninsular War. These trees are often found growing on hot scrubby hillsides around the Mediterranean, where their bark has been used for corks for hundreds of years, though plastic capsules and screw tops are changing that. A harvest of the bark every 8-10 years does not damage the tree. A tough tree, with tough leaves. These are small, often with small spiny lobes, and so different from the other Oaks that you have seen earlier on the walk.

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Glossary

- Bract** Modified leaf behind a flower or seed.
- Compound** A single leaf divided into leaflets.
- Hybrid** The offspring of the result of a cross between different species, sub-species or varieties often growing in close vicinity.
- Keys** Term applied to winged fruits (samara), especially of the Ash
- Leaflet** One part of a compound leaf.
- Lobes** Rounded indentations and promontories on a leaf edge.
- Pinnate** Having leaflets in pairs on either side of a leaf stalk.



Our map

