

BIG TREES OF LAKE OUACHITA

In 2015 a BIG tree educational and conservation program was initiated at Lake Ouachita by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The goal of the BIG tree program is to document and preserve the very small percentage (<.1%) of truly big trees remaining in forests managed by the Army Corps around Lake Ouachita. Such trees are native hardwoods and pines with a circumference over 8-10 ft. At Lake Ouachita 23 large trees have now been documented with the largest known tree being a Sugarberry over 13 ft. in circumference!



Left: The BIG Tree of Life! This massive Sugarberry (*Celtis laevigata*) supports dozens of other species. Living along its colossal trunk and large branches are mosses, lichens, Resurrection fern, Smilax vines, a variety of grasses, English Ivy, Poison Ivy, several lizard species, numerous birds, squirrels and more! A small Red Cedar tree even grows at the point of where it's spacious branches split apart skyward. This awesome tree is located in the Hwy 27 Campgrounds, near the entrance. Stop by and give this BIG tree a hug, but watch out for the Poison Ivy.

These few remaining large trees are a living legacy of the natural and cultural history of the Ouachita Mountains and the State of Arkansas. Remaining large, old-growth trees are very rare to find in most areas and they provide a special opportunity for environmental education and conservation efforts. Such trees can be 100-300 years old or older and are living museums and monuments! Some trees, especially large oaks, were once part of old homesteads, farms and communities and may be the only visible remnants of the past at that site.



The significance of large trees in Arkansas also reaches beyond the Lake Ouachita Project. Several other agencies and organizations support large tree preservation and documentation projects in the state. The U.S. Forest Service, Southern Research Station operates the "Ancient Big and Historical Trees of Arkansas" program. Portions of this program are also endorsed by the Army Corps. The Arkansas Forestry Commission operates the "Arkansas Champion Tree Program". PBS and the Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN) produced a one hour documentary film about the largest trees in Arkansas entitled "Champion Trees" and in 2014 this film won two Emmy awards. The Arkansas Native Plant Society operates the "I Love Champion Trees" program. The web-based Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture also operates the "Famous and Historic Tree program".

The preservation of the remaining BIG trees at Lake Ouachita reflects the Corp's commitment to protect these truly outstanding living legacies of nature and the cultural history of Arkansas. Such majestic trees can be visited and appreciated by generations of visitors to Lake Ouachita!

Where to see BIG trees at Lake Ouachita - Look for BIG tree interpretive signs at the following locations:

Stephens Park – Day Use Area, along parking lot: 2 trees - Water & Willow oaks.

Avery – Boat ramp, across from fishing pier: 1 tree – White oak.

Crystal Springs – Boat ramp, east side: 1 tree – Short-leaf pine.

Old Hwy 270 – Parking lot & ADA trail: 3 trees - Southern Red oaks.

Denby Pt. – Campground, 1st rd. to right, west side: 1 tree – Southern Red oak.

Twin Creek – Campground, sites 14 & 15: 2 trees - Southern Red oaks.

Hwy 27 Campground – Along road, north side, near the campground entrance: 2 trees – Sugarberry & Southern Red oak.

Photo at Right: A large Short-leaf pine, 9+ ft. in circumference - Crystal Springs boat ramp.

