



Courtesy of James L. Reveal, Lady
Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

The Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is excited to announce the 2024 Geauga County BIG TREE Contest and is currently seeking nominations! This voluntary contest promotes the beauty and benefits provided by our county's biggest and oldest trees, along with their contributions to clean water and healthy soil. The 2024 featured tree species is the **American Basswood** (*Tilia americana*). Our northernmost basswood species, the American Basswood is a wide stately tree that can reach up to 80 feet tall. The bark is gray in tint with fine ridges running lengthwise and it grows best in full sun and rich, moist, well-drained soil. This deciduous native tree tends to sprout at the base, producing a clump of tall trees around the original trunk. A member of the Linden family, its large leaves are characteristically asymmetrical, heart-shaped, and finely toothed with uneven bases. The soft, light wood is especially useful for making food boxes and furniture and Native Americans made ropes and woven mats from the tough fibrous inner bark. By far, however, the most distinguishing and noteworthy feature of the American Basswood is its small, showy, and fragrant flowers that hang from long leafy bracts... and their ability to attract bees! Known as "the bee tree" the American Basswood produces prolific amounts of nectar in the summer which is a favorite of honeybees – who use this nectar to produce a very high-quality honey. In addition, the American Basswood helps sustain countless other critters including native bees, lightning bugs, beetles, birds, mammals, and serves as a host plant for 151 species of Lepidoptera, including mourning cloak butterflies and royal walnut moths.

Participants will submit a nomination for an American Basswood which they believe might be the largest in the county. After all nominations are submitted, qualified personnel will verify the measurements using the ODNR Division of Forestry's Champion Trees Program procedures. Each tree will receive a score based on trunk circumference, crown spread, and total height to determine the winner. In addition, the District will consider each tree's ability to capture stormwater along with other economic benefits. For example, one American Basswood with a diameter of 45 inches can intercept as much as 4,587 gallons of rainfall and prevent 88 gallons of stormwater runoff each year.

BIG TREE Contest Guidelines:

- Nominated trees must be American Basswoods located in Geauga County.
(Visit <https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/plants-trees/broad-leaf-trees/american-basswood-tilia-americana>)
Only one nomination per individual tree. The first nomination received will be the official entry.
- The tree does not have to be on the property of the nominator; however, permission from the landowner must be obtained prior to nomination.
- Nominations must be submitted to Geauga SWCD no later than **Friday, August 16th**. Please email to gprunty@geauga.oh.gov or submit in person or through the mail to the Geauga SWCD, 12611 Ravenwood Drive Suite 240, Chardon, Ohio 44024.
- Qualified District personnel will verify all nominated tree measurements and use the i-Tree MyTree Tool (<https://mytree.itreetools.org/>) to provide the rainfall interception and stormwater runoff reduction capability. The decision of the District will be final.
- Geauga County's Biggest Tree will be recognized and awarded at the District's Annual Meeting in the fall. If on public land, the biggest tree on private land will also be recognized.

Questions? Contact geaugaswcd.com, 440-834-1122, or gprunty@geauga.oh.gov

2024 BIG TREE Nomination Form

1) Tree Species American Basswood (*Tilia americana*)

2) Owner Information

Name _____ Home Phone _____ Cell _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Email _____

3) Nominator Information (if different than owner)

Name _____ Home Phone _____ Cell _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Email _____

4) Tree Location/Address _____

City/Township _____ Zip _____

Location Description: Please attach a map or sketch of the tree's location on the property. If the tree is especially difficult to locate, please mark it and include any other information (GPS coordinates, photos etc.) that might be helpful in finding the tree.

Other remarks about the tree: (health, historical significance, etc.)

5) Annual gallons of rainfall intercepted _____ and stormwater runoff avoided _____ (<https://mytree.itreetools.org/>)

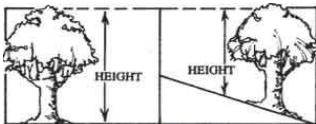
6) Estimated Tree Measurements Taken by: _____ Date: _____

Circumference of trunk (inches) _____

(Measure at 4 1/2 feet from the ground on uphill side of tree)

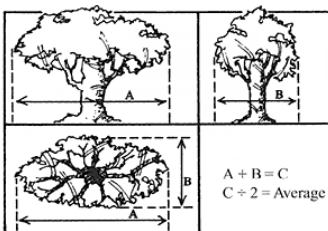


Total Vertical Height (feet) _____



Diameter of the Spread of the Crown (feet) _____

(Measure the spread of the crown in two directions and divide by two)



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Circumference (inches):

Height (feet):

Crown (feet):

Tree Index: _____

To calculate the Tree Index:

$$\frac{\text{Circumference}}{\text{in inches}} + \frac{\text{Height}}{\text{in feet}} + \left(\frac{\text{Spread}}{4} \right) = \text{Tree Index}$$

Notes: