

Geauga County

2025 BIG TREE Contest



Courtesy of Marilyn Kircus, Lady
Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

The Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is excited to announce the 2025 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 2025 featured tree species is the **Sassafras** (*Sassafras albidum*). Small but mighty, the Sassafras tree will likely not break records for its size - often growing 20-40 feet tall and only 1-2 feet in diameter. But its benefits are undeniably big! The "surefire identifier" of this native tree is three distinct leaf shapes, usually all present on the same tree. These include egg-shaped, mitten-like with one lobe, or ghost-like with two lobes. In the autumn, these leaves turn beautiful hues of yellow, orange or crimson. Considered a native gem of North America, the roots, twigs, leaves and bark of Sassafras have a pleasant, spicy scent and contain oil that have been used by Indigenous cultures and throughout time in teas, medicine, soaps, and stews. Sassafras trees prefer moist, well-drained, acidic soils and grow on a variety of sites, but are best known as pioneering species, found on disturbed sites and able to survive fire. Its bark is thick, red-brown, and deeply furrowed, and the twigs are a noteworthy bright green. A member of the Laurel family, the Sassafras is a host plant to the spicebush swallowtail butterfly and its fruit feeds deer, turkey, bear, and many species of birds in early fall.

Participants will submit a nomination for a Sassafras 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 Sassafras with a diameter of 20 inches can intercept as much as 1,990 gallons of rainfall and prevent 180 gallons of stormwater runoff each year.

BIG TREE Contest Guidelines:

- Nominated trees must be Sassafras trees located in Geauga County.
(Visit <https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/plants-trees/broad-leaf-trees/sassafras-sassafras-albidum>)
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 1st**. 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

2025 BIG TREE Nomination Form

1) Tree Species Sassafras (Sassafras albidum)

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/>)

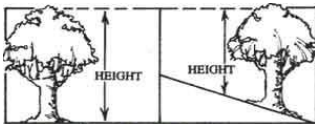
6) Estimated Tree Measurements Taken by: _____ Date: _____

Circumference of trunk (inches) _____

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

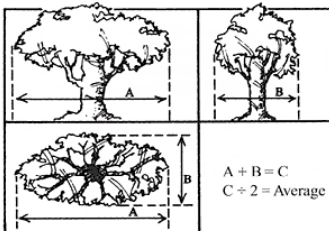


Total Vertical Height (feet) _____



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:

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

Notes: