

## Fall Color Report

### October 8, 2021

Autumn color is beginning to arrive all over The Morton Arboretum as trees, shrubs and other plants prepare for winter. Although most trees are still shades of green, look for yellow on elms, walnuts, catalpas and other trees, deep red leaves on dogwoods, and flame red on scattered sumacs. A few sugar maples are beginning to turn yellow and even pale orange in sunny spots. Acorns are dropping and the squirrels and blue jays are busy collecting them for the winter. Your favorite Arboretum gardens, collections, and natural areas change daily, so visit often through the fall.

Cool nights and warm, sunny days bring on fall colors in our collections and natural areas, although it is also being influenced by a season of dry weather. The intensity, brightness, and longevity of the color display always depends on the weather, the health of each plant, and the amount of soil moisture available to it.

All the Arboretum's grounds are showing some fall color development. Good areas to visit this week will include the Maple Collection (parking lots 8 and 14), the East Woods (parking lots 8 through 16), the Japan, Korea and China Collections (parking lots 2,17, and 18), and the Schulenberg Prairie (Parking Lot 25).

The American elms in the Elm collection are really starting to turn yellow this week, as is the large yellow buckeye near Parking Lot 18.

The seasonlong dry weather has affected many trees, such as Freeman maples in the Visitor Center parking lot and Children's Garden whose red color is dull because of drought stress. Most hackberries have already turned yellow and dropped most of their leaves.

The view from the top of Frost Hill across the Northern Illinois collection and the river valley is still mostly green, although sumacs are turning red near Parking Lot 2 and a few sugar and black maples are starting to turn a pale orange tint.

On the East Side, yellow color is appearing not only on American elms but also on catalpas, some tuliptrees, redbuds, and some pawpaws. Coffeetrees and hackberries are dropping yellow leaves. Most ginkgoes are still green, but a few trees near Parking Lot 18--those most stressed by drought--are turning yellow.

Scattered flowering dogwoods have turned a dark reddish color and are beginning to lose their leaves. Crabapple fruits are changing color and becoming more noticeable as their leaves turn and drop. Buckeye have dropped most of their yellow leaves, exposing their large tan fruits. Walnuts are also dropping nuts as their leaves turn yellow. Most spots of bright red are sumac, poison-ivy, and Virginia creeper.

Although most oaks are still green, their acorns are dropping in the Oak Collection (Parking Lot 8) and the woodlands. Silver and Freeman maples are turning color in our Maple Collection (Parking Lots 8 and 14). A large sugar maple near Parking Lot 14 is beginning to change color.

Sugar maples in the East Woods (parking lots 9, 10, 13, and 15) are beginning to show early pale-orange color, especially where their tops and sides are exposed to the sun. Only a few late asters are still blooming among the brown plants in the ground layer.

On the West Side, the woods near parking lots 20 and 23 and Sterling Pond are turning yellow, with linden, ironwood, black walnut, and redbuds providing most of the color.

The Schulenberg Prairie is in its golden fall glory with grasses turning color and setting seed. Asters and gentians provide highlights of blue and purple.