

Buckeye Tree Collections at Ohio State

The iconic Ohio Buckeye tree, *Aesculus glabra*, stands as the heart of The Ohio State University, but on the campus, the tree's legacy is preserved in two distinct groves, the Buckeye Grove near Ohio Stadium and a separate collection in the Chadwick Arboretum.

The groves showcase a variety of species and hybrids of the Ohio Buckeye, including the,

- Ohio Buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*): Considered a medium-sized tree and the fastest-growing of the group.
- Yellow Buckeye (*Aesculus flava*): A slower-growing, but larger tree.
- Red Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*): Considered a small tree.
- Arnold Splendor: A hybrid Buckeye known for better flowering and fall color.

The grove near the stadium is steeped in tradition, serving as a "living history" dedicated to the university's football accomplishments.

"They plant one every time somebody, a football player, gets the first team all American," said Dr. Laura Deeter, professor and director of the Chadwick Arboretum and Learning Gardens at The Ohio State University.

This grove, which features a path for visitors to see the trees and view plaques dedicated to the honorees, has roots dating back to the mid-1930s or early 1940s.

However, the current stadium grove is not in its original location. Due to the major renovation of Ohio Stadium around 2002, the entire grove was relocated. Rather than attempting the task of digging up and moving older, established trees, saplings were planted in the new location.

A second significant collection, the Buckeye Grove at Arboretum North, is part of the Chadwick Arboretum. Dedicated in 1994 to former Athletic Director Andy Geiger, this grove is part of a larger, more "wild" 30-acre space.

The Arboretum North collection is also a popular spot for walking, bird watching, and catch-and-release fishing.

The buckeye trees in both locations, though sturdy, face unique challenges in an urban setting. Urban plants suffer from poor soil, which on campus has a relatively high pH and a high clay content that hinders drainage.

Buckeye trees are also susceptible to leaf diseases that, while not lethal, can make the leaves "look pretty ugly" by the end of the season.

Despite these challenges, "Buckeyes in general, are fairly adaptable to urban conditions," Deeter said.

To manage the trees, campus arborists use a Geographic Information System (GIS) called Tree Keeper to track the health of over 15,000 trees on campus.

This system, accessible to the public, allows maintenance teams and the public to track the location, species, and condition of nearly every tree.