

UTAH

Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands

Utah has a wide range of climates and growing conditions in which a large array of tree species can grow, thrive, and attain incredible sizes. Most people in Utah are not familiar with the many species choices available when it comes to selecting and planting trees. Some species have achieved impressive dimensions in Utah. The Utah Champion Tree program identifies and showcases large examples of different species of trees—trees of all shapes and sizes throughout the state—for people to discover and enjoy.

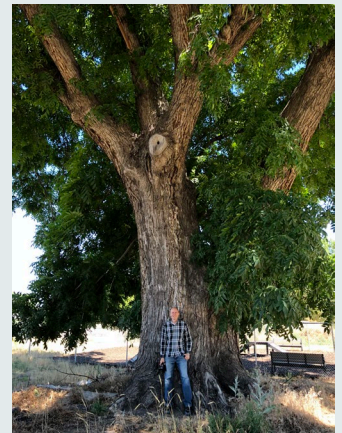
The Utah Champion Tree program was first organized by the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands (FFSL), Urban & Community Forestry Program (U&CF) in partnership with the Utah Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and the Utah Community Forest Council. The program recognizes outstanding examples of big trees of different species, some of which have achieved massive size. In 2019, the program expanded to provide information on the broad palette of tree species available for residents to plant in Utah. Just a few years ago, the Utah Champion Tree species list recognized 150 species, while today it features 213 species, with frequent additions being made monthly.



**State Champion Medlar-
Mespilus germanica, Utah
State University Campus.** Photo
Credit: Jeran Farley

This fall, the Utah U&CF Program Coordinator met with U&CF faculty at Utah State University (USU) to photograph and measure 20 new species on campus to add to the Champion Tree species list. They also identified many more species to be included in 2020. Many of these trees are large, thriving specimens that may be the only member of that species in the entire state. The Utah Champion Tree list can do more than recognize the largest of each species in the state. It can also identify and promote species that grow in Utah but have been seriously under-used and under-appreciated. It therefore provides a platform to encourage tree species diversification.

In addition to promoting species diversification, the Champion Tree program also strengthens public awareness of significant trees that could or should receive greater protection. One example is a massive English walnut (*Juglans regia*) growing in a vacant lot in Ogden. With a circumference of 216 inches, a height of 84 feet, and a spread of 79 feet, this is a special tree—a very large specimen of this tree species in the state. Dr. Mike Kuhns, a professor at Utah State University, discovered and nominated this tree as a state champion. It dwarfed the previous champion English walnut. More important, however, was the public interest generated by his find. People discovered that this special tree was at risk of being removed for a parking lot installation. Now that it has been crowned a state champion, the tree is not guaranteed indefinite protection, but there have been scores of news articles and public awareness has greatly increased interest and concern for this tree.



**State Champion English
Walnut-*Juglans regia*, in Ogden.**
Photo Credit: Jeran Farley



**National Champion Limber
Pine-*Pinus flexilis*, in Logan
Canyon.** Photo Credit: Jeran
Farley

The state Champion Tree list has also enabled the state to recognize many of its national Champion Trees. Utah currently has 12 national Champion Trees listed on the American Forests website with several new nominations underway.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands
Urban & Community Forestry Program
<https://ffsl.utah.gov/>