

January 4, 2021

### Things to Do During Covid: Go on a Tree Hunt

By Lydia Holley

With the holidays behind us and Covid still making an impact on gatherings, why not go on a little tree-hunting safari? Take a picnic lunch and make a day of it. It will get you out of the house, into nature, and can make a great photo opportunity as well as a memorable outing.

Trees are important to our health. Studies have shown that people are happier when they connect with nature, childhood asthma may be reduced with additional trees in their environment, and summer temperatures can be reduced up to 30 degrees if shade trees cover just one-third of the area.

Trees are abundant in East Texas, so it should come as no surprise that Texas is home to a number of State Champion Trees as well as some National Champion Trees. In Henderson County, a State Champion blackjack oak towers 65 ft in height. Anderson County has a State Champion red buckeye. Cherokee County is home to a National Co-Champion rusty blackhaw. A 66 ft tall National Champion gum bully resides in Freestone County. All four of those, however, are on private property, so you might not be able to see them on your hunt.

Smith County is the home of several Champion Trees. There is an 81 ft. State Champion American holly, and a 108 ft National Champion southleaf pine. These are also on land owned by individuals.

However, do not despair. Not all Champion Trees are on private property. Your tree-hunting safari can include the 74 ft State Champion Southern magnolia off CR 431 in Hopewell Cemetery and the 54 ft National Co-Champion bluejack oak in Lindsey Park. You will have to spread your arms wide to hug these trees as the bluejack oak has a circumference of almost 13 ft while the magnolia's is over 20 ft. Consider taking a tripod with you so you can take a picture from beyond selfie-stick length.

If you like to geocache or just want to make certain you have found the correct trees, you can find the latitude and longitudes of these trees on Texas A&M Forest Service Big Tree Registry's website. Happy hunting.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email [hendersonCMGA@gmail.com](mailto:hendersonCMGA@gmail.com), or visit [txmg.org/hendersonmg](http://txmg.org/hendersonmg).

