

AMERICAN BEECH

Fagus grandifolia

American Beech is a handsome shade tree for large open areas, such as in parks. This species is found throughout Pennsylvania, but is more abundant in the northern tier counties. Trees can reach heights of 80-100 feet. The bark is smooth, tight and light gray in color and is a key characteristic in identifying this species. With some imagination, a large Beech tree trunk and stump resembles the leg and foot of an elephant. The American Beech is the only Beech which produces suckers, and a thicket is often formed around the trees. Beech with its smooth soft bark, has been a target of abuse by woodcarvers who have carved messages into its bark. These scars remain for years and the initial injuries could be very detrimental to the health of the tree. In the winter the buds are long slender and pointed and arranged along the twig in a zigzag pattern. The fruit is a three-sided shaped shiny brown nut in a prickly bur. The nuts appear in pairs. These beechnuts are a very important food for wildlife including bears, squirrels, turkeys and grouse. The genus name *Fagus* is from a Greek word meaning "to eat" which refers to the edible nuts. The light green leaves are simple with a tapered tip and sharply toothed margins. The leaf veins (11-15 pairs) are parallel and run from the mid-vein to the margin.

There are three American Beech between Trinity and Mt. Laurel Avenues down the hill west of the chapel (shown in three seasons). There is a small cluster of American Beech vying for room and sunlight on the east side of the carriage house off of Valley Rd. There is one Beech on Chapel Ave. east of the chapel, and two bracketing a triple trunk Elm tree on the curve where Chapel Ave. meets Mount Laurel Ave. near the Market St. neighbor's property.

