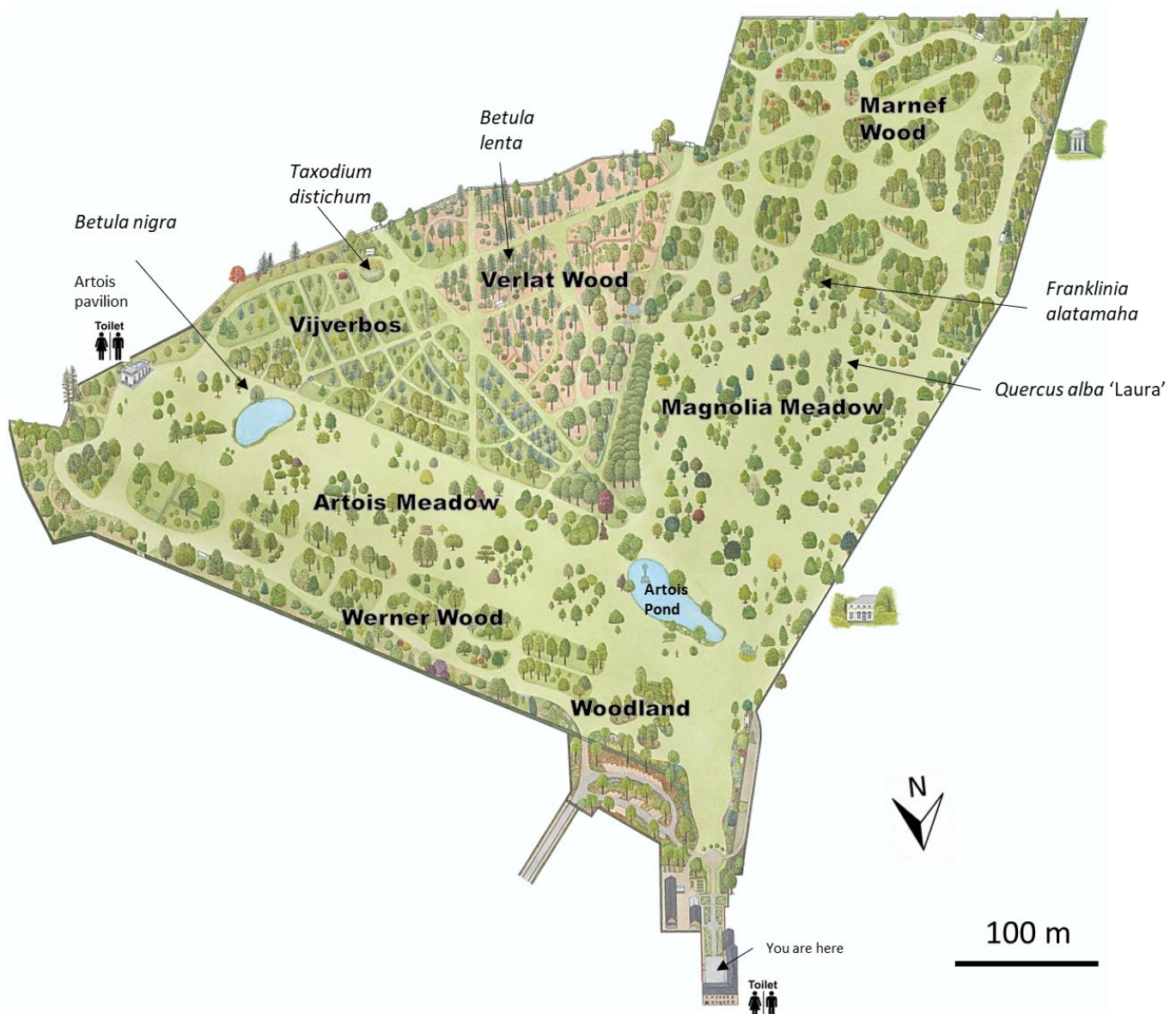




Dear visitor,

Welcome to Wespelaar Arboretum. The collection here is still fairly young: the first plantations date back to the early 1980s but have grown well and you won't be disappointed. We are famous for our *Magnolia* collection which is one of the biggest in Europe. We also have a significant collection of many other genera; almost any tree originating from a temperate climate that is worth growing in parks and gardens gets its chance with us. We prefer species to cultivars but there are also some great selections, including some that have been bred in-house. Autumn colour is one of the key characteristics for a plant to be included in our collection. The landscape design is also important, so broad vistas, spacious plantations and woodland gardens interspersed with meadows are key to the aesthetic impact of the arboretum. There are no defined paths, so you are free to roam wherever you like.

Enjoy your walk!



Courtyard: This enclosed courtyard, created in 2010, provides protection to some more tender plants like *Acer sempervirens*, *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus* var. *repens*, *Hoheria sexstylosa* and *Maytenus boaria*. In autumn *Nandina domestica* (commonly called heavenly bamboo) is an eye catcher with its sprays of spherical, two-seeded, red berries which persist until spring. The mixed borders are lined with *Ilex crenata* 'Blondie' as a healthy alternative to boxwood. All plants in the collection are labelled: shrubs and trees get a large display with their scientific name, perennials are only identified by a number: a leaflet with all names and numbers is available at the front desk for 1€.

Artois pond: This pond has been named in honour of the Artois family (1794-1840), the founders of the Park of Wespelaar. The autumn colours of the plants surrounding the pond (e.g. *Liquidambar styraciflua* 'Lane Roberts' or *Nyssa sylvatica* 'Sheffield Park') contrast well with the green colour of the fountain in the middle. The pond is the lowest point of the arboretum at 10 meters altitude above sea level. The edge of the pond is home to some favourites from marshy lands among which the sweet gale (*Myrica gale*), sometimes used to flavour beers.

Quercus alba 'Laura': This white oak, native to the southeast of the USA, has irregularly lobed leaves with a dark purplish brown autumn colour. The wood is used for barrels of Bourbon whisky. White oak grows quite fast which results in larger pores in the wood and more interaction between the wood and the whisky for flavour and fragrance. Lignin, a chemical in the wood, is broken down into vanilla, a clearly recognizable flavour in Bourbon whisky.

Franklinia alatamaha: The genus *Franklinia* has only 1 species and belongs to the tea family as do *Stewartia* and *Camellia*. The plant was discovered in 1765 by the American botanists John and William Bartram (father and son) along the Altamaha River in the State of Georgia (SE USA). In 1776 William collected seeds to grow the plant in his garden. All grown plants in the world are descendants of his plants because a few decades later *Franklinia* was extinct in the wild. Unique to *Franklinia* is its flowering in the autumn together with the beautiful red to purple autumn coloration. The name honours Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of the United States of America.

Marnef Wood: This woodland with its beautiful native oaks (*Quercus robur*) is named after Albert Marnef, who once owned the estate of Wespelaar. *Acer*, *Stewartia*, *Lindera*, *Cornus*, *Viburnum* and many other genera with rich autumn colours flourish under the protection of these centennial oaks. You will discover different attractive foliage: multi-veined as with *Sorbus caloneura*, linear as *Acer palmatum* 'Villa Taranto' and curiously lobed as *Lindera obtusiloba*.

Betula lenta: Along the path you will find two beautiful sugar birches which are native to eastern North America. The ovate to oval leaves have a doubly serrated margin and colour bright golden in autumn. The twigs, when scraped off, have a strong scent of wintergreen due to methyl salicylate, which is produced in the bark. Birch oil is harvested and used for its antiseptic qualities and as a flavouring agent for toothpaste and chewing gum.

Taxodium distichum: In this small pool we have planted some bald-cypresses in 2008. This deciduous conifer grows naturally in swamps in the southeast of North America. The amount of oxygen quantity in stagnant water is limited. The bald-cypress gets past this issue by a swollen stem base which acts like a sponge with air cavities. With age it also develops pneumatophores, woody projections which rise above the water. They should help carry oxygen to the root systems but this is not scientifically proven. The wood is resistant to wood rot and is often used for roofing, gutters and coffins. The needles turn golden to copper before falling.

Betula nigra: River birch is a vigorous, medium-sized, deciduous tree from SE USA which occurs on floodplains, swampy bottomlands and along streams. Salmon-pink to reddish brown bark exfoliates to reveal lighter inner bark. The diamond-shaped, medium to dark green leaves with doubly toothed margins turn yellow in fall. John Bartram (see also *Franklinia*) introduced the tree in 1765 in England. It is usually too contorted to be of value for timber.

Artois meadow: This meadow connects the Artois pavilion with the Artois pond and offers a stunning view from both sides. The Artois pavilion is a point of rest and its design is inspired by the hunting pavilion of the Park of Wespelaar, situated along the Leuven – Mechelen canal. From here you get a nice view on some striking tree shapes.

Wernerwood: Originally this was a pure pin oak plantation (*Quercus palustris*), planted in 1933 for the production of valuable timber. A mighty gale in February 1990 pushed over some of the taller pin oaks into the back yards of the village houses. The first three rows were cut and a lot of trees were severely pruned. The roots of pin oak are superficial and hungry: they compete with the vegetation at their feet, but this has offered opportunities. The water stress, towards the end of summer, causes several plants to colour well and early.