



Dear visitor,

Welcome to Wespelaar Arboretum. The collection here is still fairly young: the first plantations date back from 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. The aesthetics are also important, so have included broad vistas, spacious plantations and woodland gardens interspersed with meadows. 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 delicate plants like *Acer sempervirens*, *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus* var. *repens*, *Hoheria sexstylosa* and *Maytenus boaria*. Along the walls and on iron supports there is a young *Wisteria* collection of great interest. Shrubs and trees are our main focus but bulbs and perennials are included to give an additional welcome. All plants are labeled: shrubs and trees get a large plate with their scientific name, perennials are only identified by a number: a leaflet with all the names and numbers is available at the front desk for 1€. The flower beds are lined with *Ilex crenata* 'Blondie' as a healthy alternative to boxwood.

***Pseudolarix amabilis*:** The genus *Pseudolarix* contains only one species so it is called a monotypic genus. The golden-larch is a deciduous conifer but not a real larch hence its Latin name *Pseudolarix*. Its species name *amabilis* refers to the long, fresh green and soft needles that are such a pleasure to stroke: very amiable indeed! This beautiful tree grows in the mountains of east China but fossil records show that it was once widely distributed in the Northern Hemisphere. In our maritime climate it keeps a broadly conical habit and doesn't grow very high.

***Metasequoia glyptostroboides*:** The dawn redwood is another exceptional deciduous conifer. Until the discovery of living specimens in 1941 in the province of Hubei (central to east China), this conifer was only known as a fossil. The species can now be found in numerous parks. However, its natural population is fragmented and the protection of its habitat is insufficient; it is mentioned on the international Red List as endangered. It looks a little like *Taxodium distichum* (bald-cypress) but its leaves are arranged in opposite pairs along the stem instead of alternately.

**Magnolia Meadow:** This is the place to see our sun loving magnolias. They have been planted more or less in sections according to type. Close to the pond you'll find some yellow flowering magnolias: hybrids of *Magnolia acuminata*. In the centre of the meadow we planted magnolias of the *Yulania* group with their traditional hybrids (*M. x soulangeana*) and Gresham hybrids. On the far side of the meadow are the early flowering, small leaved magnolias of the former *Buergeria* section (*M. stellata*, *M. kobus* and *M. salicifolia* crosses) as well as those of the *Magnolia* section (*M. grandiflora* and *M. virginiana*). Allow your nose and eyes to guide you around. There is always something wonderful or surprising to discover.

**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 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' or 'Koto-no-ito' and curiously-lobed as *Lindera obtusiloba*.

**Vistas and Temple of Flora:** Broad vistas are an important structural element in the landscape design of the arboretum. They also create connections between the different sections and provide a sense of space. The longest vista is 720 m and reaches the Artois pavilion. Another vista here is to the neighboring Park of Wespelaar which was created in the eighteenth century by the family Artois. At this point you have a nice view on its beautiful Temple of Flora. Such temples inspired from antiquity are common follies in English landscape gardens.

**Verlatwood and Rhododendron collection:** In this wood, rhododendrons thrive in the thick layer of light acid topsoil built up by the needles of the mature pine trees. The dense canopy of pines also protects our plants from extreme temperatures. The rhododendrons have been planted according to their sections and subsections, allowing for comparisons of closely related species. The emphasis is on natural species, although we have some first crosses between species and major important hybrids deserve a space in company of their parents.

***Taxodium distichum*:** In the small pool here we have planted some bald-cypresses in 2008. This deciduous conifer grows naturally in brackish and 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.

**Artois Pavilion:** The new Artois Pavilion was inaugurated in 2021. The name refers to the Artois family, the former owners of the Wespelaar domain. The building is inspired by the old reception pavilion (former entrance of the park), the ruins of which can still be seen along the Leuven-Mechelen canal. The mosaic on the floor is based on an old version of the evolutionary tree of the flowering plants. The oculus in the middle brings light to the toilets in the basement.