The Committee of the Proprietors of the Common and Undivided Lands in New Haven was established in 1805, when the descendants of the original settlers of New Haven Colony became too numerous to effectively govern the Green and other lands they owned in common. The Proprietors are a self-perpetuating governing body of five individuals who manage the Green for the benefit of the people of New Haven.

The Garden Club of New Haven, Inc. was founded in 1924 for the purpose of creating interest in and promoting knowledge of gardening, preserving natural resources, and civic horticultural work in the Greater New Haven Area. The Club has been actively involved in the planting and care of the trees on the New Haven Green since the 1950s.

You are invited to visit the Garden Club’s website to purchase a copy of a DVD documentary about the history of the New Haven Green and to make a donation for the continuing planting and care of the trees on the Green.

www.gardenclubofnewhaven.org

American Elms in New Haven

The first Elms were planted on the Green in 1666, as gifts from a parisioner to the Reverend James Pierpont, who was the second pastor of Center Church. A century later, in 1784, John C. Hillhouse, a landowner and civic leader, began the first public tree-planting program in America. Using his own funds, he systematically planted American Elms around Green Trees to protect the area from storms and to beautify the city. In the early 1800s, New Haven had been known as “The Elm City.”

The Green now appears essentially as it did in 1889, with American Elm trees planted on both the upper and lower portions of the Green along the entire perimeter and lying both sides of Temple Street. Many other species of hardwood trees are planted on the Upper Green, and they are marked on the map provided to this brochure.

American Elm

Ulmus americana

With its grand and majestic vase-like shape, this native species was formerly widely planted as a street tree, especially in New Haven. By the 1930s, Dutch elm disease, a fungal affliction of Asian origin spread by bark beetles and through root grafts between adjacent trees, had killed most of the American elms across the country. On the Green there are surviving mature American elms, as well as disease-resistant cultivars, including Liberty and Princeton American elms.

Other disease-resistant elm species are also present on the Green, including Homestead elms which are native to Europe and North Africa, Siberian elms which are native to Central Asia, eastern Siberia, Mongolia, Tibet, northern China, India and Korea, and English elms which in spite of the name are widely believed to be from Italy especially Turkey. Elms can achieve heights of 70-100 feet. They still hold center stage in New Haven.
White Flowering Dogwood
Cornus florida

This is considered by many to be our best native ornamental flowering tree. It is tolerant of partial shade, is an understory tree; and achieves heights of 20-30 feet. Showy blooms appear in mid-May, and shiny red clusters of fruit in Sept. - Oct. provide fruit for birds. Leaves turn a rich red-brown in fall.

American Sweet gum
Liquidambar styraciflua

This is an adaptable native species with fine multiple colored leaves in the fall. It makes a very good street tree on larger sites, reaching heights of 80-100 feet. Once used to make chewing gum, its name is derived from the pleasant odor of the sap. The spiny round fruit capsule falls from Nov. - April, creating messy lawn maintenance.

Sugar Maple
Acer saccharum

Native to the eastern U.S., this is the quintessential New England shade tree, offering spectacular fall leaf color ranging from bright yellow to orange to florescent red-orange. The trees are tapped in late winter to early spring to ensure good sap flow. It takes 30-40 gallons of crude tree sap to produce one gallon of maple syrup. Reaching heights of 60-75 feet, the trees are not usually recommended for urban plantings. They are highly prized for parks and larger yards.

Ginkgo
Ginkgo biloba

Native to Eastern China, this is a tough and adaptable tree. The ancient species is known from the fossil record as early as 200 million years ago, representing one of the oldest distinct lineages of woody plants, and is unrelated to any other living tree. The female trees bear fruit-like fleshy seeds with a highly disagreeable odor, so only male trees should be planted in urban settings. The medicinal properties of the fan-shaped leaves have been appreciated for centuries and they turn radiant yellow in the fall. The tree reaches 50-80 feet.

London Planetree
Platanus x acerifolia

This versatile urban tree was discovered at the Oxford Botanical Gardens in England in the 1600s and became the favorite street tree in London. It is not a true species but a hybrid tree that was produced by crossing the American Sycamore and the Oriental Planetree. Its distinctive exfoliating camouflage-like bark can be seen from a distance and is often used to identify the tree, which can reach heights of 60-80 feet.

Pin Oak
Quercus palustris

One of the fastest growing oak trees, it is among the most widely planted and common street trees, growing to 60-70 feet tall. This native is highly tolerant of compacted urban soils and pollution. Providing good fall leaf color, its leaves turn bronze.

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Swamp White Oak
Quercus bicolor

Like the Pin Oak, this is naturally a wetland species but has inherited drought resistance. It shows great promise as a street tree due to its tolerance of pollution and compacted urban soils. Its unique bark peels into ragged curls, and its leaves are light-colored and velvety on the underside. It reaches heights of 50-60 feet.

White Oak
Quercus alba

A fine specimen tree for parks and large yards, this native is durable and slow-growing and reaches an average height of 60-80 feet. Native Americans used to make tools from the acorns, and its wood is the traditional material for wooden shipbuilding. Oak barrel staves were among the principal exports of Connecticut during the colonial period. The acorns provide food for wildlife, and of all trees, oaks support the greatest number of Lepidoptera, a large order of insects that includes butterflies and moths.

Horse chestnut
Aesculus hippocastanum

Native to southeastern Europe, this species is closely related to the American buckeye. It grows well in urban conditions, but the foliage is unacceptable to aphids and insects. The bottle-brush shaped white flowers bloom in May, and the fruit occurs in Sept. - Oct. in a thorny husk. The nuts are poisonous and should not be confused with edible chestnuts. The tree reaches heights of 50-70 feet.

Flowering Crabapple
Malus spp.

“Crabapple” is a catchall term for wild or small-fruited apples of various species. This non-native, showy flowering tree blooms in April to early May and grows to 15-20 feet in height. It is prone to insect infestation and disease and should be well-placed in the landscape, because the fruit can litter the ground and become messy. Birds, wildlife, flies and yellow jackets are attracted to the fruit which occur in late summer.

English Oak
Quercus robur

Native to northern Europe, English Oaks can grow to be over 100 feet tall with a spread of 75 feet and may live 800 years. They are encountered in parks where they can be afforded the space required to develop their broad spreading crowns.

Zelkova
Zelkova serrata

Native to Japan and a close relative of the elm, this species is often planted in an attempt to replace our lost American elms. It grows well in urban environments, is an excellent street tree choice, and is not susceptible to disease. It grows to 50-70 feet in height, and its leaves turn yellow to orange in the fall.

Red Oak
Quercus rubra

A common native urban tree throughout the eastern and midwestern U.S., it is fast growing, and its wood is commercially valuable. It reaches heights of 60-80 feet, and its acorns are eaten by wildlife.

Littleleaf Linden
Tilia cordata

A native of northern Europe, it produces delicate white to light yellow fragrant flowers in the late summer that attract honeybees. The tree is widely used in the urban landscape because of its dependable pyramidal form, dark green foliage and tolerance of difficult growing conditions. Avoid using it over driveways or terraces – the excretion from aphids feeding on leaves results in sooty mold on all surfaces below. It reaches heights of 60-80 feet.

Other hardwood specimen trees located on the Upper Green include American Hackberry, Crimson Linden, Crimson Maple, Green Mountain Maple, Norway Maple, and Bur Oak.