

## Mystery Photo #12

You might have quickly identified this mystery tree as an oak, but I understand if the small size of the leaf confused you. It took me many years to find these trees, and when I did, it wasn't the leaves that got my attention—it was the acorns.



The acorns from this tree are long and slender. I checked one of my favorite books, *Fruit Key and Twig Key to Trees & Shrubs* by William Harlow. Nothing in the book matched the acorns I found under these trees. My conclusion . . . the trees were not native to this part of North America.

You can find the trees in two places at Havenwoods—east of the trail that lies parallel to Sherman Boulevard and southeast of the children's play area (see shaded areas on map). In these same areas, you will find mature hawthornes, nannyberries, and, unfortunately, European high-bush cranberries. I finally identified the acorns. The trees are English oaks! But I couldn't solve the mystery of their presence at Havenwoods. The trees were too young to have been planted by the county when this was a county prison (1917 – 1945), I couldn't think of a reason why the Army would have planted trees in these locations during its ownership (1945 – 1970), and I was sure DNR staff or volunteers had not planted them. This put their planting date before 1980.

One day, while reorganizing files, I found a landscape-planning map dated 1976. It showed the proposed location of trees and shrubs to be planted at Havenwoods. These locations matched the areas where I had found the English oaks. However, English oaks were not on the planting list. Was this plan ever

implemented? I took the plan into the field. There were overwhelming similarities between the plan and the actual locations of the trees and shrubs in question! Now just two questions remained. Who planted the trees and shrubs? And . . . why did they put the wrong plants in the right places?

A few years later, I found a document from the City of Milwaukee Forestry Department. It proposed that "the planting of a buffer strip along the east end of Havenwoods along Sherman Boulevard and the west end between the Chicago Northwestern Railroad and the Milwaukee Railroad, will include native deciduous trees and shrubs in an effort to delineate the boundaries of Havenwoods." In the late 1970s, the City owned Havenwoods, and it was working hard to clean up and restore the land.

Why the discrepancies between the plan, the proposal, and the actual planting? We may never know. Maybe the planners thought that the plantings would be more visible southeast of the playground rather than in the northwest corner of the property, as specified in the proposal. Maybe an inexperienced nursery worker misidentified the trees and shrubs,

choosing non-native species instead of the native species indicated on the plan. Maybe, when planting time came, the recommended plant species were unavailable and ornamental species were substituted. Whatever the reasons, we can breathe a sigh of relief that, at least so far, the non-native oaks are staying where they were misplanted and have not invaded other parts of the property!

