

Just When You Thought it was Safe to Take a Walk in the Woods!

INVASION OF THE

WEIRD TREES

Censored for YOUR Protection

Lurking on
the Outskirts
of Town...

It Could be
Growing in Your
Neighborhood...

Something is
Stirring...
Rising From the
Ground...

TREES....

....they come in all shapes and sizes. They fill the air with sweet, fragrant scents of spring blossoms, and splash the landscape with brilliant colors in the fall. They cool the air with their shade and provide a barrier against the harsh winter wind. They add beauty and comfort to our lives, as well as furnishing us with thousands of products we use every day.

But this isn't about the beautiful trees or the bounties of Mother Nature. We are not going to "thank a tree" for oxygen or "hug a tree" in an affectionate display of gratitude. Some of the creatures featured here might evoke more fear than affection. In fact, the thought of hugging some of these freaks of nature might be downright repulsive.

Have you ever driven down a road or walked in a woods and happened upon a tree that is just so unusual that you are compelled to stop and stare? Have you ever said to yourself, "I wish I had my camera to capture this on film"?

During the spring of 2000, many Hoosiers took to the outdoors to do just that--to capture on film what words alone could not describe. After receiving more than 175 entries, Indiana's District Foresters employed a critical eye and years of arboreal experience to select the "weirdest" tree for each county from which photos were submitted. The results of their selections are highlighted here.

If you are an Indiana resident and your county is not represented, or if you know of a tree that is more weird than the one shown for your county, get your camera tuned up and your hiking boots ready. The deadline for entries for the next Weird Tree Search will be March 15, 2002.

And now for the year 2000's "Invasion of the Weird Trees" (if you dare to proceed).

Indiana Department of Natural Resources
Division of Forestry
402 W. Washington, Rm. W296
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-232-4105
www.in.gov/dnr/forestry

Tree surrounded by bulbous growth!



Posey county, submitted by Ron Crawford

Constipated roots cause tree discomfort!



Clark county, submitted by Bill Hurley

Connected at birth, or a bizarre courtship ritual?

Bartholomew county, submitted by Jerald & Diane Wilkerson



Pike county, submitted by Chad Evans

Littered tree seed overtakes roadside! Dekalb county, submitted by Deb Argast

Bizarre case of elephantitis found in tree!



Toddler found 16 years after climbing tree!



Crawford county, submitted by Keith Risley

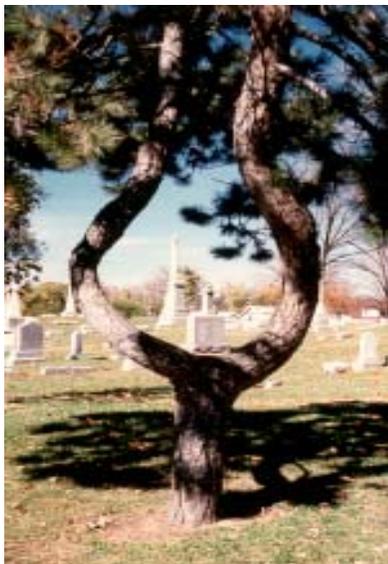
Chuckhole left unfilled in 1928 leaves highway department headache!



Daviess county, submitted by Jennifer Davis

Tree consumes livestock, takes over pasture!

Dubois county, submitted by Delbert Himself



Paul Bunyan's sling shot found!!

Delaware county, submitted by Tom Glass

Tree gives birth to human; doctors perplexed!



Marion county, submitted by

Tree grows beside itself!



Orange county,
submitted by Anne

Funhouse
mirror
permanently
deforms tree!



Lawrence county, submitted by
Steve Maddox

Bumps on log found to be human!

Franklin county,
submitted by James Blades

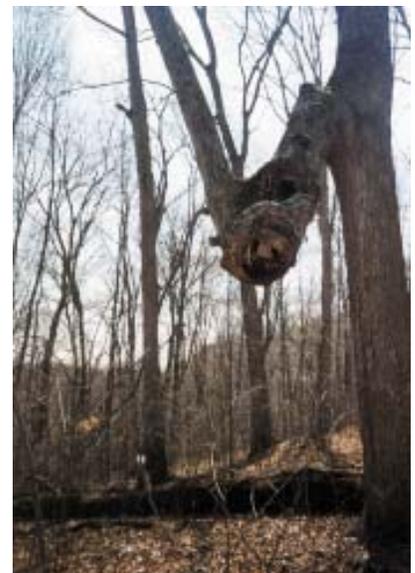


I'm a
pepper,
you're a
pepper,
this tree
wants to
be a
pepper
too!!

Lagrange county, submitted
by Judy Esterline

Martin county,
submitted by
Edward Jones

Worst case of
tennis elbow
found in tree.



Siamese Trees



Montgomery county, submitted by Wes Crawford

Crook in the woods captures boy!



Greene county, submitted by George & Ruth Goodwin

Tree warts difficult to remove!

Pulaski county, submitted by Steve Knebel



Neighbors discover they are connected at roots!!

Grant county, submitted by Lisa Dice

X-ray photo reveals mysterious growth in tree.



Perry county, submitted by Kelsie Dougan

Ghoulish tree terrorizes town!



Elkhart county,
submitted by
Carl Overpeck

Horse
swallowed
by tree
won't go
down!



Fountain county,
submitted by
Lynette McMahon



Tree's goal
to haunt
houses!

Allen county,
submitted by
Richard & Jean
Hambrock



Ghost of
Carmen
Miranda
makes
appearance!

Fulton county,
submitted by
Shirley Willard

Eagle lands,
turns to
wood!



Hamilton county, submitted
by Becky

Face on tree said to be Elvis!!



Whitley county,
submitted by Pam &
Shannon Cherry

**Picasso
discovered
reincarnated!**



Tipton county, submitted by
Angela Herrmann

Marshall county,
submitted by
Harvey Firari

**Tree lurks for
unsuspecting
motorists!!**

**Identity crisis!
Shrub or tree?**

Johnson county,
submitted by
Linda Cummins



**Stairway
to heaven
found;
not as
expected!**

Decatur county,
submitted by
Mr. & Mrs.
William Emly

**Farm haunted
by tree with
split
personality!**



Starke county,
submitted by James Shilling

Prozac of no help to drooping tree!



**Madison county,
submitted by
V. Petry**

**Tree has
appetite
for birds!**



**Warrick county, submitted by
Patsy Marshall**

**Bulked up tree
accused of steroid
use!**

**Harrison county,
submitted by
Callie Zimmerman**



**Scientists study
tree's
strange
attraction
to spruce!!**

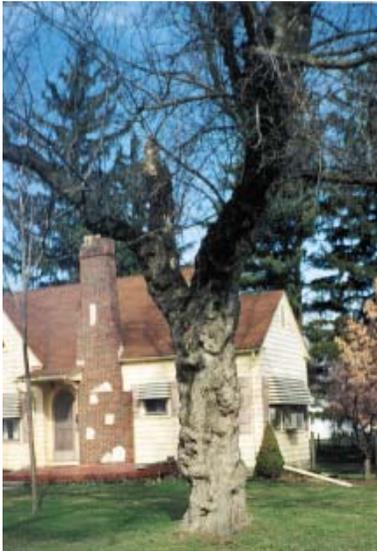
**Miami county,
submitted by
Linda Lorenz**

**Will be a
"lean" year
for this tree!**



**Wabash county, submitted by
David & Shirley Rogers**

**Toad-infested tree
develops warts!**



**Porter county, submitted by
Richard & Joan Hambrock**

**Tree sprouts
fence post;
can money
tree be far
behind?**



**Spencer county, submitted
by Duane Walter**

**Tree weaves
tangled web!**

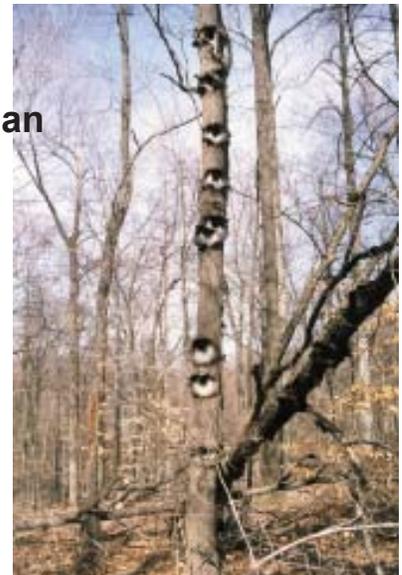
**Laporte county, submitted
by John Bealor, Jr.**



**Truck
barely
makes
curve in
road;
scares tree
half to
death!**

**Monroe county,
submitted by
Stephen Saucerman**

**Tree with
multiple
eyes baffles
scientists!!**



**Wayne county, submitted by
Phil Coffman**

Geneology tree probes for its own roots!!



**Brown county,
submitted by Mr. &
Mrs. G. Suding**

**Tree surgeon
sued over
botched
face lift!!**



**Owen county, submitted by
Cathy Meyer**

**Tree makes
clean sweep!**

**Washington county, submitted by
Barbara Helsel**



**Tree
clones
itself in
plot to
take over
forest!**

**Morgan county,
submitted by
Stephen Saucerman**



**Hancock county, submitted by
Sharon Johnson**

**Syc-a-more?
Try less!**



**Vanderburgh county,
submitted by Jerome
Bockting**



**Mono epidemic linked
to kissing trees!**



**Jennings county, submitted by
George Duffitt**

**Government tree
found lying
down on job!!**

**Huntington county, submitted by
Terry Pfister**



**Strange
case of
elephantitis
found in
tree!!**

**Noble county,
submitted by
Gordon Bloom**

**Alien emerges
from tree
skeleton!**



**Howard county, submitted by
Bob Mickelson**



They're Weird--But How Did They Get That Way?

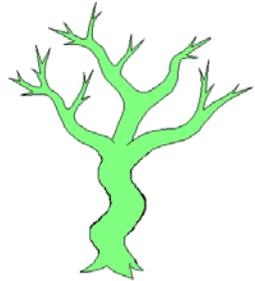
Science is founded upon explaining the unknown and making sense of the weird. But some freaks of nature even defy scientific explanation. The collection of weird trees displayed in this booklet provide a challenging exercise for modern investigators.

A team of highly trained and experienced DNR scientists agreed to examine these specimens and, if possible, determine the causes of their weirdness. Here are their findings:

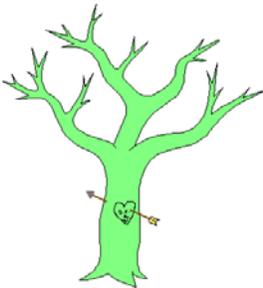
SYMPTOM: Crooked or misdirected trunk

DIAGNOSIS: All plants grow upward, reaching for the sun! These examples of unusually growing trees provide a lesson in how persistent plants are in sticking to this rule. Each of these trees has experienced some physical damage. Perhaps a windstorm blew down another tree and it landed across this tree when it was much smaller. As side branches on that bent stem reached for light, they took over growth dominance. Many years later, these side branches now appear as the dominant stem(s) of the tree. Early Americans used this characteristic of trees to mark trails. A sapling bent over and tied down can be pointed in the direction of a trail. This growing trail marker will last for many years with no maintenance.

--Steve Marling, District Forester



SYMPTOM: Embedded object



DIAGNOSIS: A common notion about trees is that an object fixed to the tree will get higher as the tree grows. That is not correct. Trees grow from the tips of the branches, and once something is attached to the tree, it will not get higher over time. It will, however, be eaten. Trees grow not only in height, but also in girth. As the tree grows in diameter, it also will “eat” or grow around any object fixed to the tree or even next to it. Hence, a nail placed into a tree when it is only a sapling will be “consumed” and be deep inside the trunk when that tree reaches maturity. Trees will eat nails, wires, cables, signs, and fenceposts. Trees will even sprout and grow up through abandoned fence, machinery, or almost anything else. As the trees grow, they will slowly grow around any foreign object. Often, these deeply embedded objects cannot be detected when the tree is mature. Because these hidden objects can be very

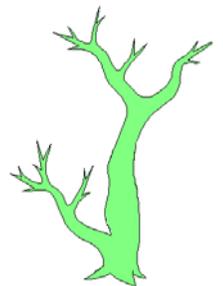
dangerous if they come into contact with a saw, it is not recommended to nail or fasten anything to a tree — The tree will eat it! Trees pictured in this booklet have embedded a sign and a fence post. The sign was obviously nailed to the tree, but the fencepost was placed too close to the tree’s trunk. These embedded objects cannot be safely removed. Over time, the trees will continue to “consume” the objects until the trees have completely embedded them inside the tree’s trunks.

--Jayson Waterman, District Forester

SYMPTOM: Unusual branching

DIAGNOSIS: Unusual or abnormal branching is normally the result of some type or injury. If the top of a tree is damaged, the side branches closest to the point of damage will turn up towards the sky and establish dominance. In other instances, a lower branch may become damaged or distorted. If it continues to receive enough sunlight to maintain growth, it will continue to grow in its distorted condition. Early Indian tribes have been known to bend the branches of trees to permanently mark the location of trails.

Insects such as mites, fungi and dwarf mistletoe can all cause the over stimulation of dormant buds which results in the formation of dense mats of branches commonly called witches’ broom. And lastly, sometimes the genetics of a tree just go a little haywire and you get branching that is unusual. Many common ornamental varieties that are prized for their unusual appearance are the result of natural genetic mutation.



--Chuck Ratts, District Forester

SYMPTOM: Gnarly Trees

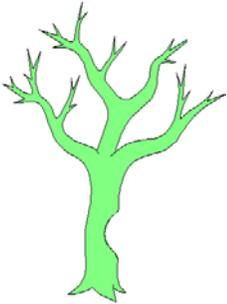
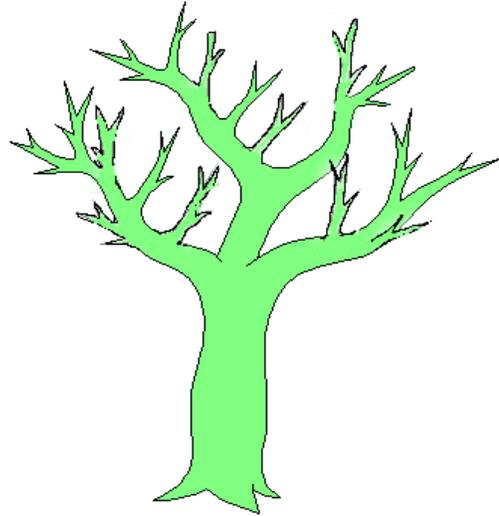
DIAGNOSIS:

I thought that I would never see
A plant as gnarly as that tree,
And what has caused it such distress
To grow into such an ugly mess?

Could it be caused by site or genes
Or dirt compacted by machines
Which dig and fill to improve the land?
It could be more than a tree could stand.

Or are they like the human race
Which accompanies aging with a wrinkled face
And twisted joints and stiffened limbs.
Would they call us “old gnarly stems?”

--Steve Brandsasse, District Forester



SYMPTOM: Indentations

DIAGNOSIS: Some indentations are caused by a canker, or fungus, which forms what appear to be “eyes” in the bark. The nectria canker can actually wrap completely around the tree and kill it, but usually only slows the growth of the tree. This fungus can be spread but is not commonly found in trees older than 20 years of age.

You may recall one tree with a person and dog inside it. Forest gnomes may exist according to this picture. This gargantuan tree, a sycamore, has hollowed out to form a large cavity within. Most likely, this tree has been periodically flooded a number of times and lies in low ground where water saturates the soil. This wetness can often cause decay from the inside out. An old injury from logs floating by in a flood or logging damage can also cause the tree to decay. Sometimes, coon hunters will “smoke out” a raccoon hiding within and the fire will burn out the center of the already hollow tree. Not a place I would want to be sheltered during a storm because the tree is probably the tallest thing in the woods and a prime target for lightning.

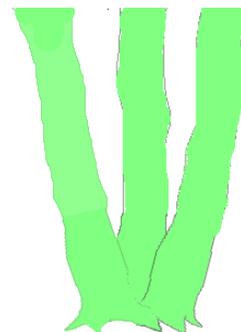
--Brad Rody, District Forester

SYMPTOM: Multiple stems

DIAGNOSIS: Some multi-stemmed trees can be explained as a result of phototropism. Plants are attracted to light. When a tree is knocked or blown over, the side branches feel the need for light and grow toward it. It has been said Indians used to do this on purpose to identify hunting spots, or to give them directions through a woods.

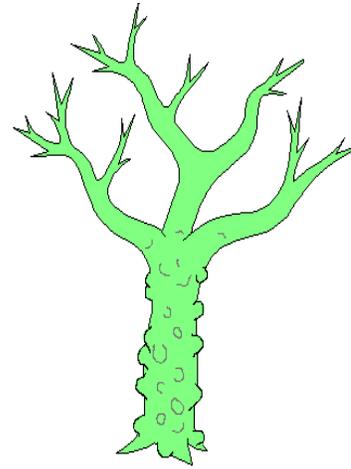
Other trees with multiple stems are a result of stump sprouts. When a tree is harvested, buds beneath the bark sprout as a survival tactic. Their chance of becoming new trees is dependent on the size of the original tree and their location on the stump. Those closest to the ground have a better chance. Most hardwood trees will produce sprouts. Usually they will total 2, 3 or 4 stems. Some very weird trees may have more sprouts that originate higher on the stump. My wife and I have 3 Stump sprouts named Michael, Steven, and Eric. Also a secondary sprout, Alexandra was recently born to Steven and his wife Erin.

--Don Stump, District Forester



SYMPTOM: Warts, Bumps and Burls

DIAGNOSIS: Teenagers and witches take heart. Mother Nature has cursed some things beside you with ugly bumps and warts. Trees have bumps, warts, and burls. The teenager fears the facial bumps before a date, the witch looks much more evil with warts on her nose and chin, and nothing disfigures a tree quite like an unexplained burl. The teenager grows past his problem, the witch is only imagined, but the tree remains ugly forever. Best of all we learn to love and appreciate things because of their differences from the norm.



Whenever people see a tree with unique bumps and burls the question is, “Boy, what caused that?” I continue to ask the same question and receive answers from, “I don’t know.” to “We think maybe....” Insects, damage to the bark, viruses, and mutated growth buds have all been suspected. Maybe we should just accept this unique gift and not ask why.

We do know that inside these ugly, abnormal growths is some of the most interesting grain patterns found in any wood. These distinct woods are highly prized for tables, clocks, bowls, and other decorative products. Few of us can look at these beautiful things made possible by ugly without wondering why. I think I want it to remain a mystery. That way I can enjoy creating my own explanation for each one I find and realize the value of diversity.

--Rex Gambill, District Forester

SYMPTOM: Trees connected together

DIAGNOSIS: What appear to be natural grafts between two trees or between two branches of the same tree are not that uncommon. Anyone who spends a lot of time in the woods has seen this phenomenon. How does it happen? Apparently as the trees grow in diameter extreme pressure builds at the point where a projecting limb contacts another tree or another part of the same tree. If both members are parts of the same tree then both are genetically identical and a true graft may occur. If there are two trees of the same species then the genetic similarity may allow a true graft. The artificial grafting of fruit trees and ornamentals is a routine procedure involving tissue from trees of the same species. Where different species are involved a true graft would be far more difficult because of genetic incompatibility. What appears to be a true graft may be deceiving and there would be no way to know for sure without damaging the point of contact.

--Mike Coggeshall, District Forester

WARNING

We know there are more weird trees out there. We advise you to always take the following precautions:

1. Never go to the woods without a camera
2. Be sure to have plenty of film

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