The NDSU-North Dakota Forest Service maintains the records for the Champion Tree Program. The “ND Register of Champion Trees” contains the champion trees and the runner-ups. Nominations for the largest tree of each genus and species are accepted throughout the year, and are due no later than December 31 at the state headquarters. The register is updated with the new champions and released shortly after the New Year.

**Roots of the Program**

On May 4, 1984, the ND Society of American Foresters and the ND Tree Farm Committee began a public contest on Arbor Day (the first Friday of May in ND) to find the largest of each native tree species in the state. The contest focused on getting some attention for trees and their owners, while having some fun. It was modeled after the “National Register of Big Trees” run by American Forests. The owner(s) of the largest tree in each native tree species category below received a wood plaque as a prize the following Arbor Day.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| American Elm | Cottonwood | Peach Leaf Willow |
| Balsam Poplar | Green Ash | Ponderosa Pine |
| Birch | Hackberry | Quaking Aspen |
| Black Ash | Ironwood | Rocky Mountain Juniper |
| Boxelder | Limber Pine | Slippery Elm |
| Bur Oak | Linden/Basswood | Missouri River Willow |

In 1986, when North Dakota’s state centennial emphasis on *planting 100 million trees* was initiated, the North Dakota Forest Service and Centennial Trees Commission joined as sponsors. The “ND Champion Tree Register” was renamed and expanded to include the first and second native and naturalized non-native trees. Since that time, winners and nominators have both received a certificate and have been included in the Register. Missouri River willow was added to the NRCS FOTG (Field Office Technical Guide) in 2016 as a native ND tree.

The **American Forests** keeps the record for the “National Register of Big Trees,” sponsored by the Davey Tree Expert Company. This program began in 1940. A copy of the national register of big trees can be found at their web site at: [https://www.americanforests.org/get-involved/americas-biggest-trees/champion-trees-national-register/](http://www.americanforests.org/our-programs/bigtree/)

The **NDSU-North Dakota Forest Service** provides the “ND Register of Champion Trees” free upon request in hard copy or it can be found on our web site in a pdf file at: <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/ndfs/about-north-dakota-forestry/champion-trees-of-north-dakota>

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