



What Is a Liberty Tree?

The original Liberty Tree stood in Boston and was central to the story of the American Revolution. The huge elm tree was situated near Boston Common and is where people plotted against British rule in the years leading up to the Revolutionary War. The Sons of Liberty gathered under its branches to protest the Stamp Act and other British actions the revolutionaries deemed offensive, and it's where they planned out movements against the crown.

Thomas Paine, one of the founding fathers and a prolific writer, preserved the role of the Liberty Tree in his poem of the same name, thereby ensuring that people throughout the colonies were familiar with the tree and its symbolism.

When British troops chopped down the tree in Boston and used it to fuel their fires, the Americans continued their acts of defiance by gathering at what they then called the "Liberty Stump." In a show of unity, people and places began establishing Liberty Trees throughout the other colonies.

These trees could be any species and any height, and they could be located in any geography. In general, they were trees that people were familiar with because of their beauty, size or location. There was never a full or accurate count of all the Liberty Trees, but it's believed that the last one to survive was in Annapolis, Maryland, on the campus of St. John's College.

Though a hurricane ultimately destroyed that tree, 13 seedlings were recovered from its remains and shared with the 13 original states. In addition, it has been discovered that a scion of that last Liberty Tree remains on the campus of St. John's. It was a graft taken from the original tree in 1889, meaning that it contains the same genetics as the final Liberty Tree.

Today, a retired forester named Champ Zumbrun harvests seedlings from that scion Liberty Tree each fall, then fosters them in a greenhouse in Allegany County, Maryland, and distributes them around the country. By July 4, 2026, every Maryland county will be home to a tree, and there will be a young Liberty Tree in each of the 13 original states. However, Zumbrun's home of Allegany County (affectionately called "[The Mountain Side of Maryland](#)") is home to the highest concentration of Liberty Trees in the United States. Fifteen of them are located on public lands throughout the county, which has established a [Liberty Tree Trail](#) to help visitors locate these natural monuments to freedom.