BIO 140 Arboretum Project

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Liriodendron tulipifera (Tulip Tree) #358

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Tulip Tree

*Liriodendron Tulipifera*

Tree #358
Over the past three months, I have been observing a *Liriodendron Tulipifera*, otherwise known as a Tulip Tree, to see how the tree changes over a short period of time. This Tulip Tree is located outside in the front of Walgreen Hall on our Salve Regina Campus. Salve Regina University is identified as a Level II Arboretum with over 1,400 trees that include over 100 different species. All of the trees that are a part of the arboretum on campus are assigned a number and this Tulip Tree is #358. Not only is this tree a part of the arboretum, but it is also considered a sentinel tree. Beginning in the first week of February, I would go to this tree about every two weeks to make observations and take pictures of it in order to track its changes. Figure 1 below is the first picture that I took of my tree. While I did this until the second week of April, unfortunately I was not able to see many drastic changes in the tree throughout the semester, however, I was lucky enough to see some leaves starting to grow towards the end.

Figure 1: Tulip Tree #358 on February 9, 2022
The natural range of the Tulip Tree is in the Eastern United States, anywhere from New England, west to the Great Lakes, and south towards Florida and Louisiana (USDA). These trees can live anywhere from 200 to 250 years. In some rare cases, there are even Tulip Trees that are around 300 years old. The natural growth rate of this tree species is a height of 70 feet to 90 feet, with a spread of about 40 feet (Arborday). Every year, the height of Tulip Trees increases by about two feet (Arborday). Tulip Trees begin to flower in late spring to early summer, which is why the branches of the tree were bare for the majority of my observations. This tree grows beautiful greenish-yellow flowers (Arborday). Usually from mid-October to mid-March the Tulip Tree will seed (USDA).

This specific Tulip Tree in front of Walgreen Hall is still in good condition, however, it is considered to be over mature. Regarding the dimensions of the tree, it has a DBH of 4.5 feet and a DBH 1 of 58 feet. It also has a canopy radius of 30 feet. All of these dimensions make this specific Tulip Tree to be classified as being in the large height class. Compared to the other trees on the Walgreen Hall lawn, this Tulip Tree does seem to tower over a few of them, and its branches spread out causing it to slightly interfere with other trees around it.

Tulip Trees are very useful for both humans and wildlife. One of the major ways that they are useful for humans is that they can be used for word production (SFGATE, 2020). Wood from Tulip Trees is commonly used for flooring, fencing, and certain types of furniture (SFGATE, 2020). Another way that they are useful for humans is that they provide shade over tables, in backyards, and in parks (SFGATE, 2020). For wildlife, they are useful because they provide food and shelter for many different species (SFGATE, 2020). Also, they can be very good for acting as a home for animals that are raising a family (SFGATE, 2020). Some of these
animals include different types of birds, squirrels, deer, and rabbits. Tulip Trees are also valued as honey trees that become pollinated by bees (USDA).

Figure 2: Tulip Tree #358 on March 8, 2022       Figure 3: Tulip Tree #358 on April 7, 2022

Starting with my first observation on February 9, 2022, the Tulip Tree in front of Walgreen Hall had bare branches with no leaves. This was the common trend every time I went to see my tree until about mid-April. Figures 2 and 3 above look very similar to Figure 1, since they were all taken in February, March, and early April when the Tulip Tree had no leaves or flowers forming yet. Although it was upsetting not being able to see the Tulip Tree full of its bright flowers, it makes perfect sense due to the flowering period. However, finally during mid-April when I was walking towards the Tulip Tree, I saw green flower buds and leaves starting to form. Below, Figure 4 shows the Tulip Tree from a far, and Figure 5 shows a closer up view of the flower buds and leaves that are now on the once bare branches.
Over the past semester, I was able to gain a lot of knowledge about Tulip Trees and the Salve Regina Arboretum as a whole. The wide variety of trees all around campus are beautiful, and the Tulip Tree is one of my favorites. With only having one semester to observe the Tulip Tree, I was still able to see a few key changes in its life cycle. On top of just my observations, the information that I gained from the research that I did was very beneficial. Without my research, I would not know when to expect to see changes in the Tulip Tree over the semester. Since I knew when its flowering period was, I was able to go to the tree around mid-April to look for small leaves and flower buds. Overall, this Arboretum project made me appreciate the trees on campus a lot more and I am looking forward to observing more trees on campus in the future.
References


