22. *Fagus grandifolia* Ehrh.

American Beech

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The largest known American Beech in Michigan is located in Onekema (Manistee County) of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula.

*Description of the Species:* The American Beech is a member of the Beech family (Fagaceae). In this family, members of the genus *Quercus* (Oaks) have acorns, while those of *Fagus* (Beech) and *Castanea* (Chestnut) have a bristly fruit. The Beech fruit divides into two sections at maturity (Fig.1) while the fruit of a Chestnut divides into four. Furthermore, Beeches have male flowers in round, pendulous inflorescences whereas Chestnuts have male flowers in an elongated more or less erect spike and Oaks bear them in elongated hanging catkins. Finally, Beech buds are long and pointed whereas Chestnut and Oak buds are shorter and more ovate.

*Location of Michigan’s Big Tree:* Michigan’s largest known American Beech can be found in Onekema, Michigan. To find the tree take US 31 north from Manistee and turn left (west) into Onekema onto 8-mile Rd. Turn right at the stop sign and follow Main St. (M-22) through the town. Main St. becomes Portage Point Drive. Clark Rd. is just past the point at which M-22 leaves Portage Point Drive, about 1.5 mi. from the center of Onekema. Clark Rd. is unimproved. The tree is near the corner of Portage Point Drive and Clark Rd. on a densely wooded slope. The first house on the right is # 9017 Clark Rd., home of Mike Sebaly. The tree is approximately 250′ up the slope from Portage Point Drive, and 170′ from Clark Rd. The map coordinates for this location are Sec. 26, T23N R16W.

*Description of Michigan’s Big Tree:* The tree has a solid trunk which divides into 2 main trunks about 5′ above the ground. The south trunk divides again into 3 large branches. The circumference of the tree at breast height was measured on July 26, 1995 at 193″ (490 cm) [Diameter = 61″ (156 cm)]. The crown spread was measured at 106′ (32 m). The height was measured at 98′ (30 m), substantially less than the 185′ (56 m) previously recorded by Paul Thompson, reflecting the loss of several large branches. Although height has decreased significantly, its State Champion status remains secure because State Champion trees are determined by the circumference of the trunk at breast height alone.

**INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE**

If you would like to join us in extending this series of articles by visiting and describing one or more of Michigan’s Big Trees, please contact Elwood B. Ehrle for help with locations, specifications for taking measurements, and assistance with the
The Michigan Botanical Club encourages your involvement in this activity. Please remember to ask permission before entering private property.

DEDICATION

This series of articles is dedicated to the memory of Paul Thompson, Michigan’s Big Tree Coordinator for over 40 years, who died in 1994.

LITERATURE CITED
