There is a tendency to hibernate during winter months, but now is the perfect time to explore the Arnold Arboretum. Nothing says winter like conifers draped in snow, so enjoy an invigorating walk through the Conifer Collection.

Witness treasures often missed during the spring and summer months. Winter-blooming plants, evergreens, and ornamental bark take center stage, while winter berries provide notes of color for visitors and needed food for wildlife. There are beautiful moments at every turn. A beautiful, historic landscape awaits you.

Appreciate the legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted, side-by-side with the ever-changing gift of winter’s presence at the Arnold Arboretum.

This self guided tour was made possible through the generosity of Peter and Leslie Ciampi

This is an abbreviated version.
To read about all thirty highlights visit the Visitor Center for the map in its entirety.
Textured Bark

Once its leaves have fallen, the rich cinnamon, orange, and brown bark of the paperbark maple (Acer griseum) glows in winter light. The bark exfoliates in thin, paper-like sections, curling away and exposing a creamy undersurface. Originally from China, the Arbororetum specimens in the maples and Explorers Garden are the largest and oldest in the United States. Paperbark maple is another Ernest Henry Wilson introduction.

Medlar (Mespilus germanica) is a large shrub or small tree with fruit that persists long into the winter. The hard fruit requires a period of cold weather before it softens and becomes edible, a process called bletting.

Sweetgum (Liquidambar styraciflua) is easily identified by its golf ball sized, spherical, spiky fruit. This unusual fruit has inspired numerous common names including monkey ball, bonnyknocker, and conkleberry. The surface of a fully-matured and dried sweetgum fruit is punctuated by forty-five to sixty holes, which serve as exit hatches for their tiny seeds. Seeds are a preferred delicacy of finches and mourning doves.

Winter is the perfect time to appreciate the architecture of deciduous trees. A light snowfall enhances the experience, making structure, from trunk base to twig tip, more noticeable. Each tree species has a characteristic branching structure, and the dawn redwood (Metasequoia glyptostroboides) bears an especially notable one. In winter you can see its distinctly conical shape, horizontally-spreading branches, and deeply-fluted lower trunk.

Winter jasmine (Jasminum nudiflorum) has cheerful, petite, waxy, golden flowers that offer a welcome sight during the bleak days of winter. Unlike other jasmine species, the winter jasmine’s scent is unremarkable. Luckily, it makes up for this with an extended bloom time from November to March.