

GOOD BOOKS ON TREES

Below is a short list of books about TREES worth exploring, compiled by Pastor Erik Kindem.

NON-FICTION

Witness Tree: Seasons of Change with a Century-old Oak by Lynda Mapes

The [Witness Tree](#) book and blog project is an intimate look at the human and natural history of a single, 100-year-old red oak tree at the Harvard Forest, led by 2014-2015 [Bullard Fellow](#) and award-winning newspaper journalist for *The Seattle Times* [Lynda Mapes](#). Lynda also created a rich archive of posts on her [Witness Tree Blog](#), detailing her discoveries as the book unfolded, and bringing readers along in her life as a journalist embedded at the Harvard Forest. The short [Witness Tree film](#) introduces you to her topic. *“Nature doesn’t need us, actually. We need nature—we need a functioning natural world if we are to persist. We are the species most at risk and with the most to lose if we cannot make a change.”* – Lynda Mapes

The Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben

A fascinating and intimate account of how trees grow, socialize, interact with their environment, and even *feel*. Beautifully written and drawing on groundbreaking scientific discoveries, this book reads like a wondrous fairy tale of the forest that will take your breath away.

The Man Who Planted Trees by Jim Robbins

The story of a man who set out on a mission to reforest the world by cloning the oldest, largest, and most resilient trees - champion trees - to create a Noah's Ark of tree genetics. It's also the story of a *New York Times* journalist who had his doubts. Through narrative and research, we uncover incredible human accomplishments and the essential role of trees in our survival.

What a Plant Knows by Daniel Chamovitz

Ever wonder if your plants have feelings? This absorbing and often surprising book looks at how plants respond to touch, sound, smell, sight, and even memory. Using the latest research in genetics, Chamovitz reveals that we may have more in common with trees and flowers than we realize!

American Canopy: Trees, Forests, and the Making of a Nation by Eric Rutko

An American history book that examines history from the perspective of its forests — how important they have been and how they have been viewed over time (from a resource to be exploited to a resource to be enjoyed through recreation). This book marks the first time someone has treated America’s forests and trees as a subject for a broad historical study spanning four centuries.

The Wild Trees: A Story of Passion and Daring by Richard Preston

Hidden away in foggy, uncharted rain forest valleys in Northwestern California are the largest and tallest organisms the world has ever sustained—the coast redwood trees, *Sequoia sempervirens*. Ninety-six percent of the ancient redwood forests have been destroyed by logging, but the untouched fragments that remain are among the great wonders of nature. The biggest redwoods have trunks up to thirty feet wide and can rise more than thirty-five stories above the ground, forming cathedral-like structures in the air. Until recently, redwoods were thought to be virtually impossible to ascend, and the canopy at the tops of these majestic trees was undiscovered. In [The Wild Trees](#), Richard Preston unfolds the spellbinding story of Steve Sillett, Marie Antoine, and the tiny group of daring botanists and

amateur naturalists that found a lost world above California, a world that is dangerous, hauntingly beautiful, and unexplored. The deep redwood canopy is a vertical Eden filled with mosses, lichens, spotted salamanders, hanging gardens of ferns, and thickets of huckleberry bushes, all growing out of massive trunk systems that have fused and formed flying buttresses, sometimes carved into blackened chambers, hollowed out by fire, called “fire caves.” Thick layers of soil sitting on limbs harbor animal and plant life that is unknown to science. Humans move through the deep canopy suspended on ropes, far out of sight of the ground, knowing that the price of a small mistake can be a plunge to one’s death.

FICTION

The Overstory by Richard Powers

Winner of both the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award, Powers’ novel is a sweeping, impassioned work of activism and resistance that is also a stunning evocation of—and paeon to—the natural world. From the roots to the crown and back to the seeds, *The Overstory* unfolds in concentric rings of interlocking fables that range from antebellum New York to the late 20th century Timber Wars of the Pacific Northwest and beyond. There is a world alongside ours—vast, slow, interconnected, resourceful, magnificently inventive, and almost invisible to us. This is the story of a handful of people who learn how to see that world and who are drawn up into its unfolding catastrophe.

Billy Bardin and the Witness Tree by Mary Penson

The account of a boy's quest to save an important piece of Arlington, Texas, history and in the process convince his recently widowed grandfather how important he really is. The novel is based on the real efforts to save the Witness Tree in 1991. Billy Bardin's quest begins when K-Mart plans to develop a shopping center at the site of the five-hundred-year-old tree. As Billy studies the tree's history for a school assignment, his grandfather tells him about his career laying out roads and racetracks as a surveyor. Grandpa shows Billy his beautiful old brass transit, the instrument he used to survey land, and explains how the Witness Tree was the point from which all property in Arlington was measured. Billy's mother inadvertently gives the transit to a church rummage sale, and Billy sets off to recover it, save the tree, and restore Grandpa's dignity.

CHILDREN

The Lorax by Dr. Seuss

“UNLESS someone like you...cares a whole awful lot...nothing is going to get better...It's not.” – The Lorax. Long before saving the Earth became a global concern, Dr. Seuss, speaking through his character the Lorax, warned against mindless progress and the danger it posed to the earth's natural beauty.

The 2013 award winning film *The Lorax*, inspired by the Dr. Seuss book, takes place in the walled city of Thneed-Ville, where everything is artificial and even the air is a commodity. When a boy named Ted, hoping to win the heart of his dream girl, Audrey, learns of her wish to see a real tree, Ted seeks out the Once-ler, a ruined old businessman outside of town in a stark wasteland. Upon hearing of how the hermit gave into his greed for profits and devastated the land over the protests of the Lorax, Ted is inspired to undo the disaster. However, the greedy Mayor of Thneed-Ville, Aloysius O'Hare, has made his fortune exploiting the environmental collapse and is determined to stop the boy from undermining his business.

The Tree by Dana Lyons

While recovering from a back injury, Dana Lyons went camping in the Olympic Rain Forest. For four days he read and played his guitar at the base of an ancient Douglas Fir tree. As he was packing up to return home, a strange thing happened—a fully formed song came flowing through him. Looking up into the giant tree, he said, *“I’ll bet this is your song.”* He wrote the song down, and in the years that followed had many occasions to perform it. (Including our children’s school, Pathfinder K-8, where it was also set to sign language.)

Whenever he introduced The Tree, he would tell audiences that the author of the song was a Douglas Fir, even though he only half-heartedly believed it himself. Then, one day on the ferry to Orcas Island, Dana ran into an old friend who invited him to join a celebration: after a ten-year struggle, the Madrona Point burial ground was finally returned to the Lummi people. Dana joined his friend, and after the feast his friend told him the tribal chief wanted to hear The Tree.

“As I sang, the elders seemed riveted to each note and word. Later, I told the story of the song’s origin and that I had always wondered if it really did come from that ancient Douglas fir.”

“It did,” said the chief. “I recognize the tune.” He then explained, “It is known in our tradition that each tree has its own song. Our music comes from them. We show our respect for the great trees by singing their songs and playing them on the flute. We must all work to save the ancient groves in our territory.”

“Ever since that day,” says Dana, “I have looked upon all living things in a new light. I humbly dedicate this book to its author, The Tree.”

On Peace’s final Season of Creation Sunday, June 28, 2020, a virtual choir recording of Lyons’ song will be performed.