

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information,
contact: Jesse Gilmore
Horticulture Agent, Wildcat Extension District
jr637@ksu.edu, (620) 724-8233

Local Osage Orange Joins the Ranks of Champion Trees

Last month, I was called out to a home in Parsons to assess whether an Osage orange tree was the largest of its species in the state. A few weeks ago, the Osage orange specimen was confirmed as the new state champion after submission to the Champion Tree Program.

The Champion Tree Program is a celebration and a showcase of large and important trees in public and private landscapes. Its purpose is to bring attention to the value that trees provide. Each state has a Champion Tree Program that is administered by a forest service or conservation department. All of the results from each Champion Tree Program are then compiled by the American Forestry Association to determine national champions.

Each program uses a standardized formula to determine its champions:
Circumference of trunk (inches) + Height (feet) + Crown Spread (ft)/4 = Total points

If the points total is greater than the current champion, the tree you are measuring is the new state champion. In Kansas, the Champion Tree Program is administered by the Kansas Forest Service, which tracks the largest tree of over 140 different species, most of which are native to Kansas. According to KFS's register of champion trees, southeast Kansas now has 6 state champions:

- American elm – Bourbon County
- Shellbark hickory – Labette County
- Shumard oak – Woodson County
- Water oak – Crawford County
- Osage orange – Labette County
- Eastern redcedar – Wilson County

Two Kansas champions are also current national champions: an eastern Cottonwood in Sheridan County, and a common juniper in Leavenworth County. Previous national champions that have recently been beaten out are a western soapberry and a Texas red oak.

The success of the Champion Tree Program depends on constant vigilance from the general public and a willingness to nominate trees. If you think you might have a potential state champion tree, give your local extension office a call to confirm species and measurements for a nomination. Having a state-champion tree is a good way to show the importance of trees to our landscapes and ecosystems.

For more information, contact Jesse Gilmore, Horticulture Agent, (620) 724-8233, jr637@ksu.edu.

###

K - State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer