

Tsuga canadensis

Eastern Hemlock



Dust of Snow
by Robert Frost

*The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree
Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.*

The native Eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) thrives in cool, moist woodlands along the banks of streams and creeks, and often on the north-facing slope of a hillside. Beyond Bussey Hill lies Hemlock Hill, where an old grove of hemlocks gives the shaded hillside a prehistoric feel. Thousands of years of little disturbance allowed Hemlock Hill to mature to a climax forest which is a relatively stable and undisturbed plant community that has evolved through stages and adapted to its environment. Before the Arboretum was established, most of the land was cleared for farming purposes; except for Hemlock Hill. Although some trees had been cut for lumber, the area had never been entirely cleared, because its steep rocky slopes were unsuitable even for pasturage.

Frederick Law Olmsted planned the design of the Arnold Arboretum around existing stands of trees and the natural topography of the site. The “hanging hill of hemlocks” was a prominent feature that Olmsted admired. He selected this “ancient grove” as one of the three exceptional vistas that would be lost if the Arboretum were not incorporated into Boston’s park system.



Although most of the groups of trees at the Arboretum are arranged according to the Bentham and Hooker classification system, Olmsted wisely chose to disregard the dictates of taxonomy when siting many of the shrubs. He enhanced the beauty of the hemlock grove and created one of the Arboretum's most stunning landscapes when he moved rhododendrons and kalmias, members of the heath family, *Ericaceae*, from their position in the botanical sequence and placed them along the foot of Hemlock Hill. Hemlock Hill is the largest Arboretum woodland and occupies 22 acres. It is home to a number of birds, amphibians, and ferns that prefer the shady understory of dense woodland. It is one the Arboretum's handful of minimally managed, natural areas.

Dr. Charles S. Sargent, Director of the Arnold Arboretum for 55 years summed it up in a few words in his monumental *Silva of North America* - "No other conifer surpasses the hemlocks in grace and beauty."



Due to the steep hill and rougher terrain, Hemlock Hill is one of the Arboretum's least-visited areas. But did you know there is a wide, gently sloped path that can take you to the top?