In 1793, Jefferson wrote, “What would I not give that the trees planted nearest round the house at Monticello were full grown.” Today, he would likely be delighted to see the majestic and venerable trees growing on the grounds of Monticello. Some of the oldest trees include willow oaks towering above the North Dependency and the Fish Pond, little leaf lindens framing the east entrance walkway, and a large catalpa shading the winding walk surrounding the West Lawn.

These trees are integral to the overall sense of history and place at Monticello and are tended with the same level of care and attention given to the valuable items inside the house. Jason Young, manager and curator of historic gardens, leads a team that looks after the trees year-round, climbing them to remove dead branches, inspect for signs of decay, and check their brace and lightning protection cables. They also take measures to protect against harmful insects and periodically test the soil around the trees for nutrients, acidity and compaction.

In the photo above, Young inspects the brace cables in a Chinese mahogany, which help prevent limbs from snapping off during storms and ice or snow events. This tree, whose trunk is an impressive 17 feet in circumference, was probably planted around 1890 by Jefferson Monroe Levy, who owned Monticello from 1879 to 1923.

To help support Monticello’s preservation efforts, please donate at monticello.org/give or contact us at giving@monticello.org or 434-984-9820.