

# The Scary Oak

## *Kettle Moraine State Forest*

There's a downright spooky tree growing along the nature trail in the Kettle Moraine State Forest in Walworth County. It is an old bur oak, monstrous in size and appearance. Typically, open-grown bur oaks develop short, heavy trunks to support wide-spreading crowns composed of massive lateral branches. These lateral branches and twigs grow crooked, giving the tree a corkscrew appearance.

The sign in front of the “big, bumpy, burly, bur oak” explains that burls—a kind of tumor-like, uncontrolled growth of wood cells—are often started by insect damage, fungus disease, or physical abrasions. Burls tend to make a tree useless as timber, and they certainly make it impossible to split up into firewood. But the tough and wavy-grained burls are sought after by wood artists, for they can be made into magnificent bowls and other art or household objects.

Source: Elizabeth Deakman, Madison



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Elizabeth Deakman