

Lesser-known fact: every witch needs a birthday tree. It's where we anchor ourselves as the seasons roll. I looked for mine for six months. I started by trawling the banks of the Yarra River, the wide, brown snake bisecting Melbourne. I walked its bike-track edge, approaching promising trees (no criteria), wondering out loud, "are you my birthday tree?". No shame there, but also to no avail.

One night after work, I decided to try my luck in Melbourne's CBD oasis, the Royal Botanic Gardens. It's a ten-minute stroll for our door to its gate. There, my Big Hairy Angel and I flipped between lying on the grass, watching ducklings dabble, and peeping through our bins at birds.

Next, for no particular reason, we reversed our regular route, finding ourselves in an untapped section. Weird. We almost lived in the Gardens.

In this pocket, the tallest tree's leaves were a Kermit-green blanket. I circled its trunk, listening to native bees humming bee business above. "Are you my tree?". I rested my hands on cracked bark, and felt a wash of wellbeing. I backed up to take a picture with my phone. I asked again, double checking, "are you my tree?". I glanced at my screen. In the snap, a rainbow flare emanated from its naming plaque. *Ulmus Glabra*. That meant squat to me. So, I googled. In common parlance, it was a Scotch Elm, AKA the Witch Tree. My neck hairs prickled. My birthday tree had found me.