

The Need for Trees



Trees are very important to people, animals, insects, fungus, and even other trees. This is because trees provide so many things for people and the forest, including shelter, habitat, food and oxygen. This TRACK Trail Adventure will help you identify six of the most common trees found along this trail.



Use this brochure to identify and learn about trees. For your safety, stay on the trail and be aware of your surroundings. Poison ivy climbs up the trunks of trees too... so if you see a hairy vine don't hug that tree!

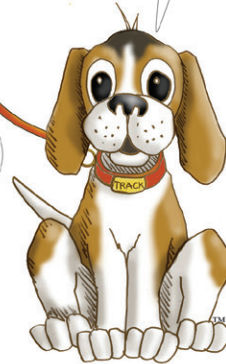


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The next generation of stewards will help preserve the world's plants, animals, natural lands and our heritage. What will you do to make a difference?



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 Providing a network of
 fun-filled adventures that get
 kids and families active outdoors
 and connected to nature.*



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Just like trees, seeds come in different shapes and sizes. With a little help from soil nutrients, moisture and sunlight, seeds can sprout into seedlings. For most tree species, when the sprout has reached 4 feet tall and up to 4 inches in diameter it becomes a sapling. Saplings officially become trees when their trunks are thicker than 4 inches in diameter at chest height.

Tree Cycle Checklist:
 Can you find a...

Seed? _____

Seedling? _____

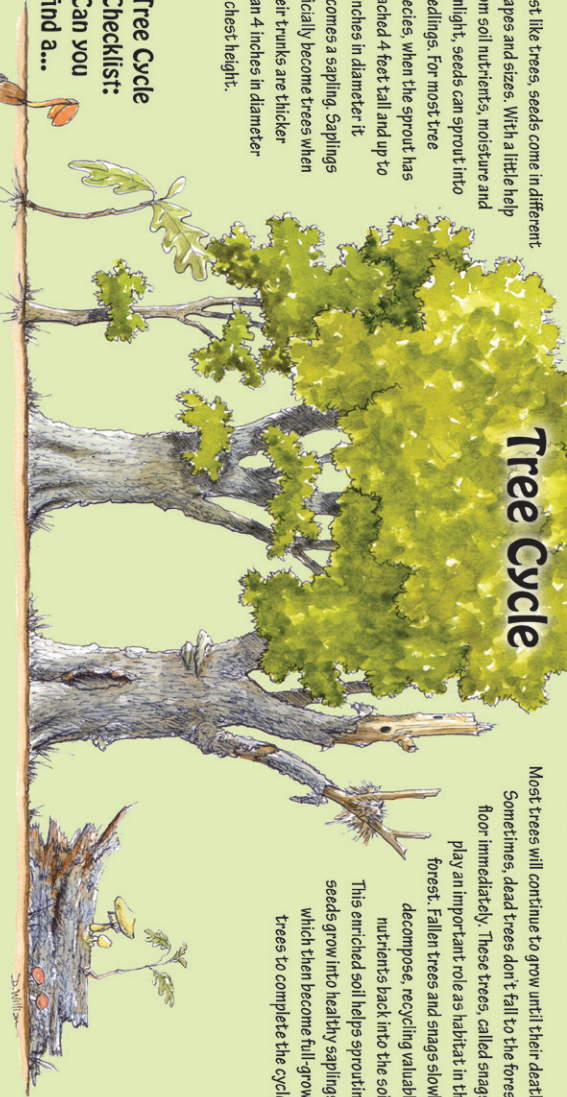
Sapling? _____

Tree? _____

Snag? _____

Fallen Log? _____

Tree Cycle



Most trees will continue to grow until their death. Sometimes, dead trees don't fall to the forest floor immediately. These trees, called snags, play an important role as habitat in the forest. Fallen trees and snags slowly decompose, recycling valuable nutrients back into the soil. This enriched soil helps sprouting seeds grow into healthy saplings, which then become full-grown trees to complete the cycle.

☐ **American Beech** (*Fagus grandifolia*)



With its extremely smooth, light gray bark and leaves with serrated edges, the American beech is a very easy tree to identify. The fruits (beech nuts) are eaten by a large variety of birds and mammals, including ducks, blue jays, deer, black bears and foxes. Beech wood is used commercially for flooring, furniture, plywood, railroad ties, paper pulp and heating.

☐ **Flowering Dogwood** (*Cornus florida*)



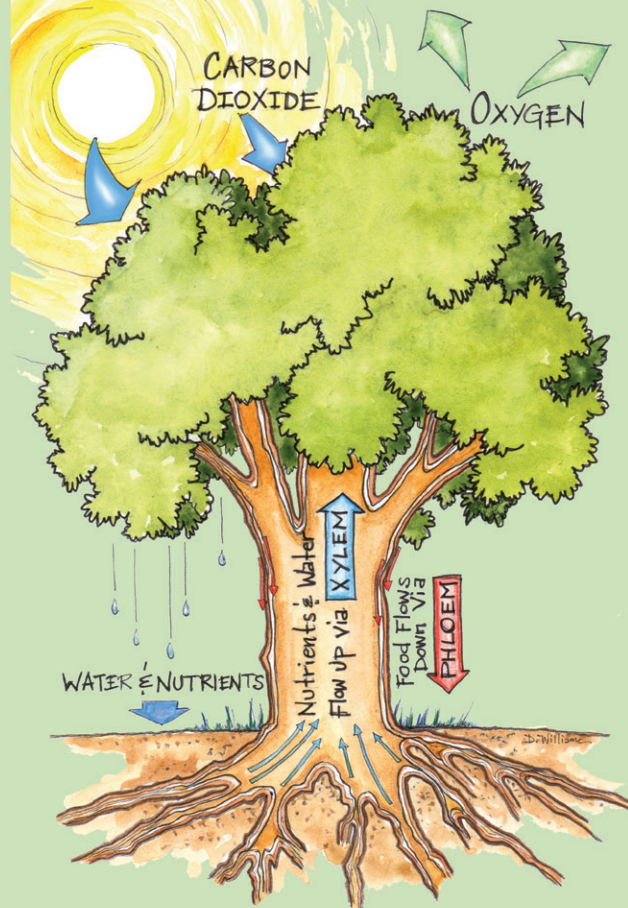
The flowering dogwood is a small tree that is abundant throughout the eastern United States. The bark of a dogwood has small cubic plates. The white “petals” of the dogwood flower are actually sepals (modified leaves), while the true flowers are the small yellow clusters in the middle. The buds look like gray-green chocolate chips. Dogwood trees were historically used to create quinine - a fever reducer.

☐ **Sugar Maple** (*Acer saccharum*)



Sugar maple trees have light brown to gray bark with long deep furrows on older trees. The leaves have pointed lobes and turn beautiful shades of red, orange, and yellow in fall. The fruits are **samaras** (have wings) and spin like helicopters in the wind. Sugar maple trees are the primary source of maple syrup. Sugar maple wood is used for basketball courts, baseball bats, bowling pins and musical instruments.

The Need to Know How Trees Grow



Plants and trees have the ability to make their own food in a process known as **photosynthesis**. They do this by sucking water and nutrients from the soil up through their xylem and into their leaves. The water and nutrients are combined with carbon dioxide and sunlight to make a sugary food called **glucose**. This food then travels down through the phloem to the rest of the tree, so it can grow.

Illustrations by David Williams, Winging it Works

☐ **White Oak** (*Quercus alba*)



The leaves of the white oak have rounded lobes, and the bark is light gray and scaly on older trees. The acorns are elongated with a shallow cup, and have a sweet taste, which makes them a preferred food of deer, bear, turkeys, squirrels and other wildlife. Because of the water-tight quality of the wood, white oak was valued in olden times for shipbuilding, and is still used today to make barrels.

☐ **Sycamore** (*Platanus occidentalis*)



The sycamore is a large, fast growing tree that is easily recognized by its mottled bark, which peels off in large irregular sheets to reveal shades of white, green, yellow, and brown underneath. The sycamore is also known as the buttonwood tree because of its round, pointed fruits (buttonballs). Native Americans used sycamore trees to make a variety of medicines.

☐ **Redbud** (*Cercis canadensis*)



Redbud is a small tree that blooms with beautiful pink or reddish-purple flowers in the spring. It is a favorite ornamental plant along roadsides and in gardens throughout the eastern United States. Native Americans used the bark to make medicines for various illnesses. The flowers are an important source of nectar for hummingbirds and honeybees, and the seeds are eaten by birds, deer and squirrels.