



The Need for Trees

Trees are an essential part of our environment! They are important to other plants, fungi, wildlife, and people and provide countless benefits, such as oxygen, shelter, and food. In this adventure, you'll learn to identify six of the most common trees found along the trail.

Remember to stay on the trail and leave no trace. For your safety, look out for other plants, like poison oak or ivy, that may be climbing up the tree!

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All trees start out as seeds that will sprout into seedlings.

A sapling is the next stage of a tree's life. Seedlings become saplings when they reach four feet tall.

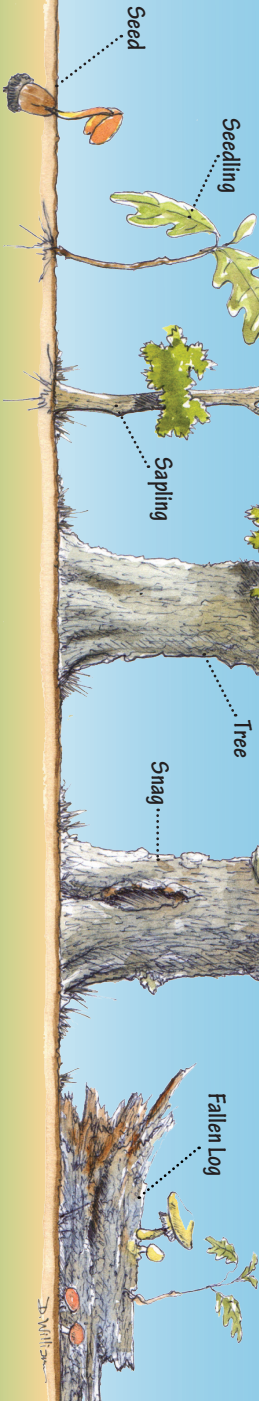
Saplings officially become trees when their trunks are thicker than four inches in diameter.

Tree Life Cycle

When a tree dies, it sometimes becomes a snag, which is a dead tree that hasn't fallen.

Fallen trees and snags slowly decompose and recycle nutrients back into the soil.

Healthy soil will help new seeds grow into saplings, which then become full-grown trees to complete the cycle.



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Can you find a... Seed? ___ Seedling? ___ Sapling? ___ Tree? ___ Snag? ___ Fallen Log? ___

● Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)



The tulip tree is easy to find in the woods given its straight, gray trunk that can span over 100 feet and its large, broad leaf that resemble a cat's face. Due to its size and straight growth, this tree provides a variety of useful lumber. The tulip tree is very important for pollinators, and in the spring, bees collect nectar from the abundant yellow-orange flowers to make a rich, dark honey.

● Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)



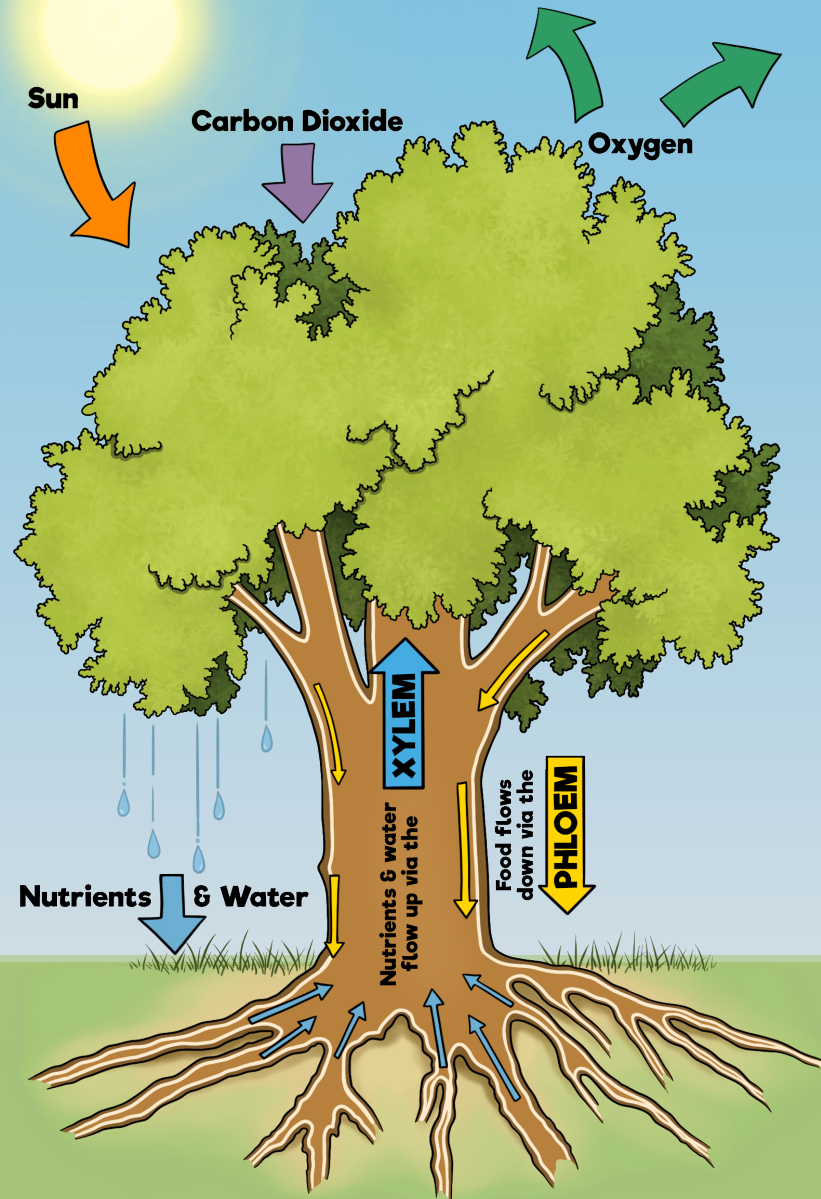
Able to grow in almost any soil condition, the red maple is one of the most abundant and widespread trees in eastern North America. With red twigs, buds, flowers, and seeds, it's easy to see how the red maple got its name. Red maple is favored for its flexible, sturdy, and beautiful wood, and it is often used to make musical instruments, such as guitars, banjos, and drums.

● White Oak (*Quercus alba*)



The white oak has leaves with rounded lobes and bark that is light gray and scales as it ages. The acorns are long with a shallow cup and loved by squirrels, deer, wild turkeys, bears, and other wildlife. Because of its tight, water resistant wood, white oak was valued for shipbuilding and is still used today to make barrels!

The Need to Know How Trees Grow



Most plants make their own food through a process known as **photosynthesis**. This occurs when nutrients and water flow up from the roots via the xylem and combine with carbon dioxide and sunlight absorbed in the leaves. This chemical reaction produces **oxygen**, which is released into the air, and **glucose**, a type of sugar, that is dispersed throughout the rest of the tree via the phloem.

● American Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)



The American sweetgum gets its name from the fragrant sap, or resin, found under its gray, wrinkled bark. It has distinct star-shaped leaves and hard, spiky fruit, called "gumballs." This tree is one of the most common hardwoods in the southeastern U.S. and an important source of lumber for plywood, furniture, and wood pulp. Many animals depend on the sweetgum for both food and shelter.

● Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*)



The loblolly pine is the second-most common species in the United States. It can reach up to 150 feet in height, with the largest found in Congaree National Park. It has reddish brown bark with deep fissures, and large, scaly plates, yellowish-green needles in bundles of three and up to eight inches long, and seed cones about five inches in length. This tree is one of the fastest-growing pines and an important lumber species.

● Eastern Redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)



The eastern redcedar is an evergreen growing up to 60 feet tall and distinguished by its scale-like needles and red, fibrous bark. The species is known for its age, with some found close to 1,000 years old! The seed cones are berry-like with a waxy coating and an important food source for wildlife. The wood is highly resistant to decay and used for furniture, instruments, and outdoor structures.