



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 on the trail.

While exploring, stay on the trail and be sure to leave no trace! If you see birds or animals hanging out, give them lots of space and never try to touch or feed them.



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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.

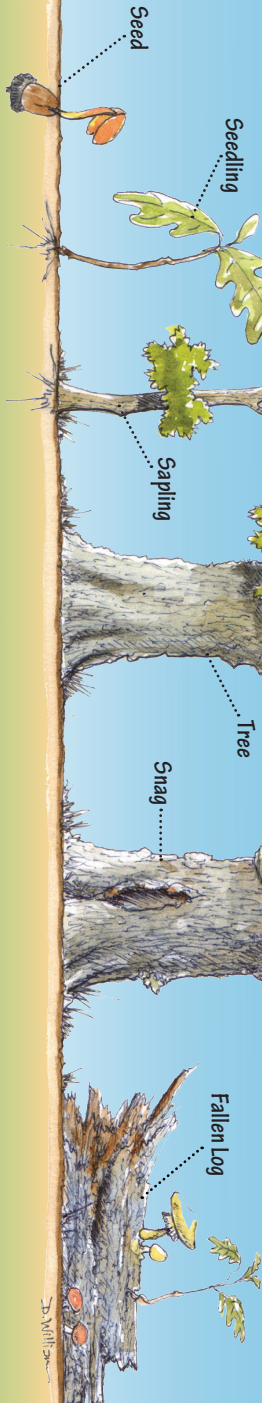
Saplings officially become trees when their trunks are thicker than four inches in diameter.

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.



Can you find a...

Seed?

Seedling?

Sapling?

Tree?

Snag?

Fallen Log?

● Southern Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*)



Live oaks are known for their spread of long, heavy, twisting branches. The bark is thick, dark brownish-gray, and deeply ridged. Leaves are thick and shiny with a long oval shape. Its acorns are long and dark brown with deep lighter colored caps. Native Americans used many parts of the tree for food, dyes, and medicine. It was important lumber for boat building, the dense wood giving the *USS Constitution* its nickname, "Old Ironsides."

● Loblolly Pine (*pinus taeda*)



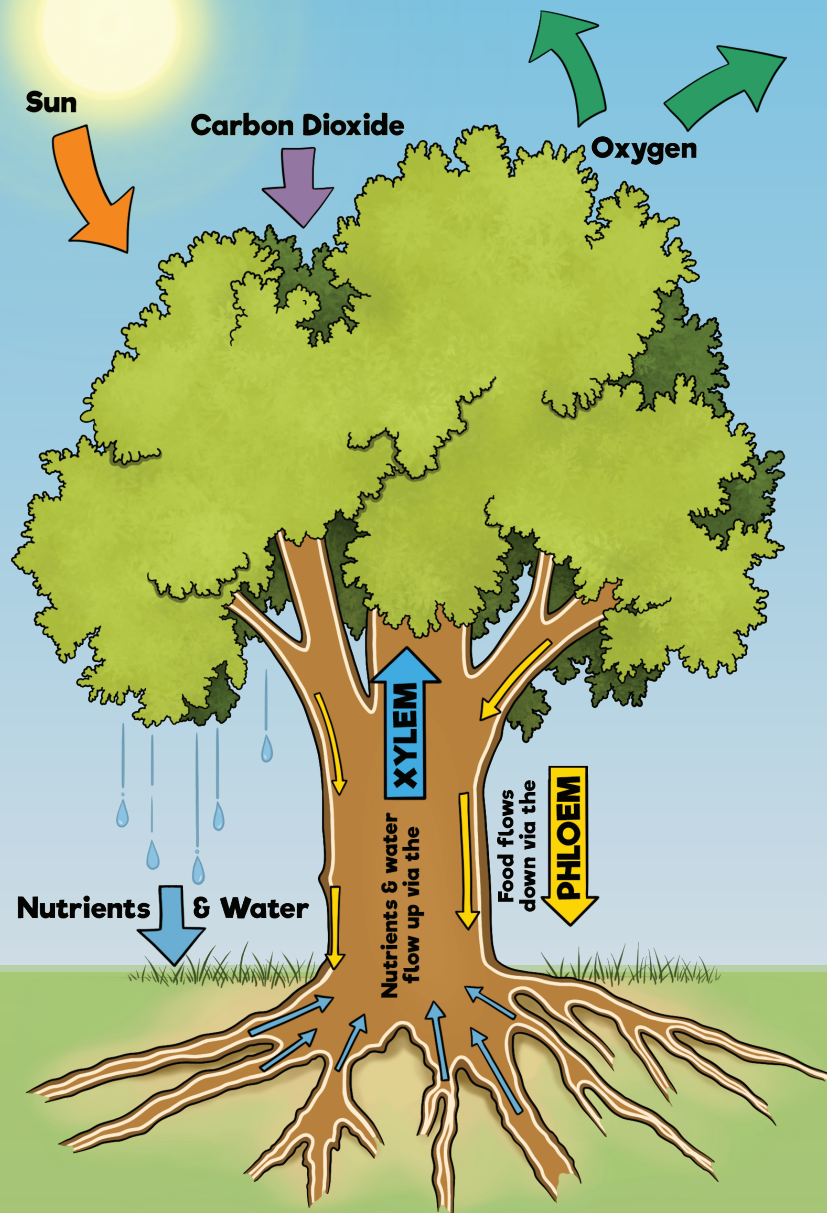
Loblolly pines have clusters of needles that grow in groups of three. The bark is thick, scaly and grey with layers of brown underneath, and their pinecones are brown and prickly. The loblolly can grow very quickly in either wet or dry soil. Because of how fast it grows, people plant them in huge numbers to later be used for lumber and paper. People also plant them to create shade and to stop erosion.

● Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*)



A popular ornamental and landscaping tree, the southern magnolia has smooth gray bark, large leathery evergreen leaves, and fragrant white flowers. The flowers can grow almost a foot in width. In the fall, southern magnolias produce cone-shaped clusters of bright red fruits which are eaten by squirrels, mice, and various songbirds.

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.

● Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)



The Sweetgum is a "pioneer plant", meaning that Sweetgums are among the first to begin growing in empty soil. Sweetgum seeds are carried by the tree's unique, spikey fruit, called a "gumball", and each fruit can contain up to 50 seeds. Other characteristics of the Sweetgum include its star-shaped leaves, and gray, wrinkled bark. Many animals depend on the Sweetgum for both food and shelter.

● Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)



Growing straight and tall with a light gray bark and a large broad leaf that looks like the tip has been bitten off, the tulip poplar is easy to find. Due to its large size and straight growth, this tree provides a lot of useful lumber. Tulip poplar is also a very important tree for honey production. In spring, honeybees collect nectar from the poplar's large and plentiful yellow-orange flowers.

● Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)



Look for stringy, reddish bark with ridges in a criss-cross pattern. Many bald cypress trees have a wide trunk base for stability during floods. Unlike most conifers, bald cypress trees shed their leaves each winter. Unique to bald cypress, "knees" are roots that have grown upward above the ground and may help anchor the trees in soft soil. Bald cypress trees cause floodwaters to slow down and help trap pollutants.