



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.

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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Kids in Parks is a program of the

TRACK Trail Community Partners:



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.

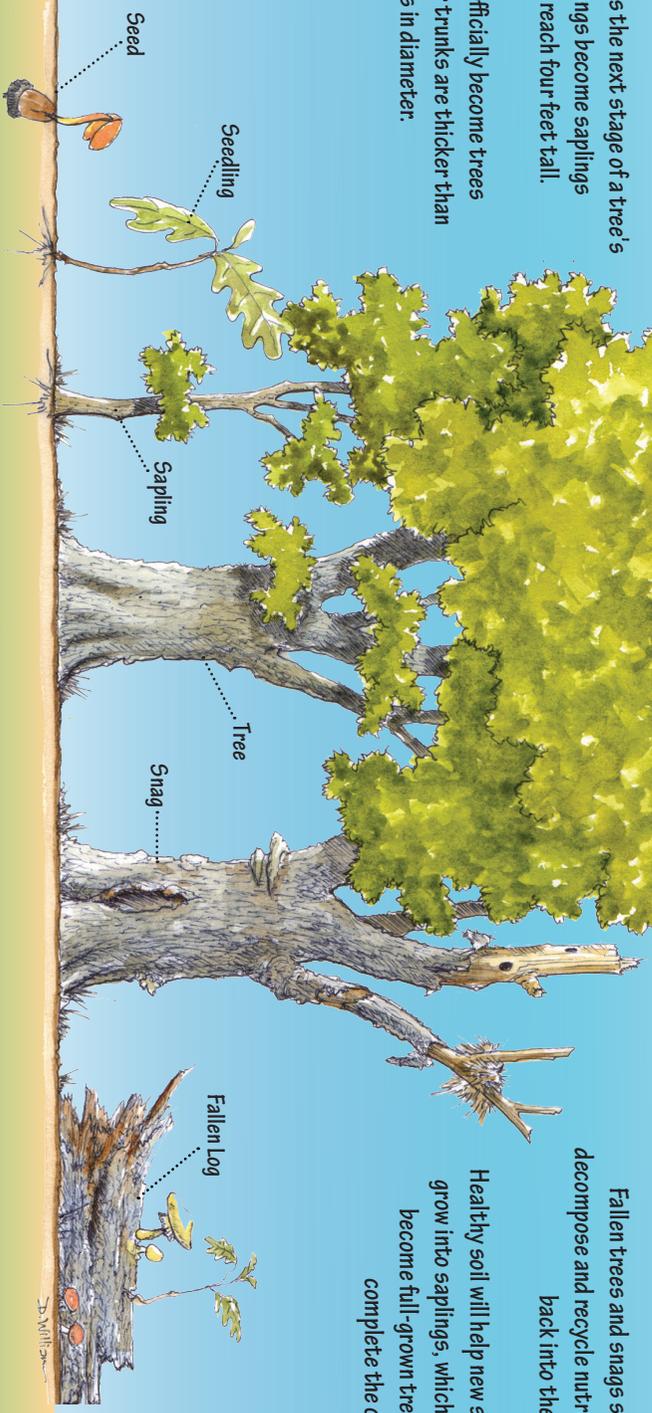
Saplings officially become trees when their trunks are thicker than four inches in diameter.

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? ___

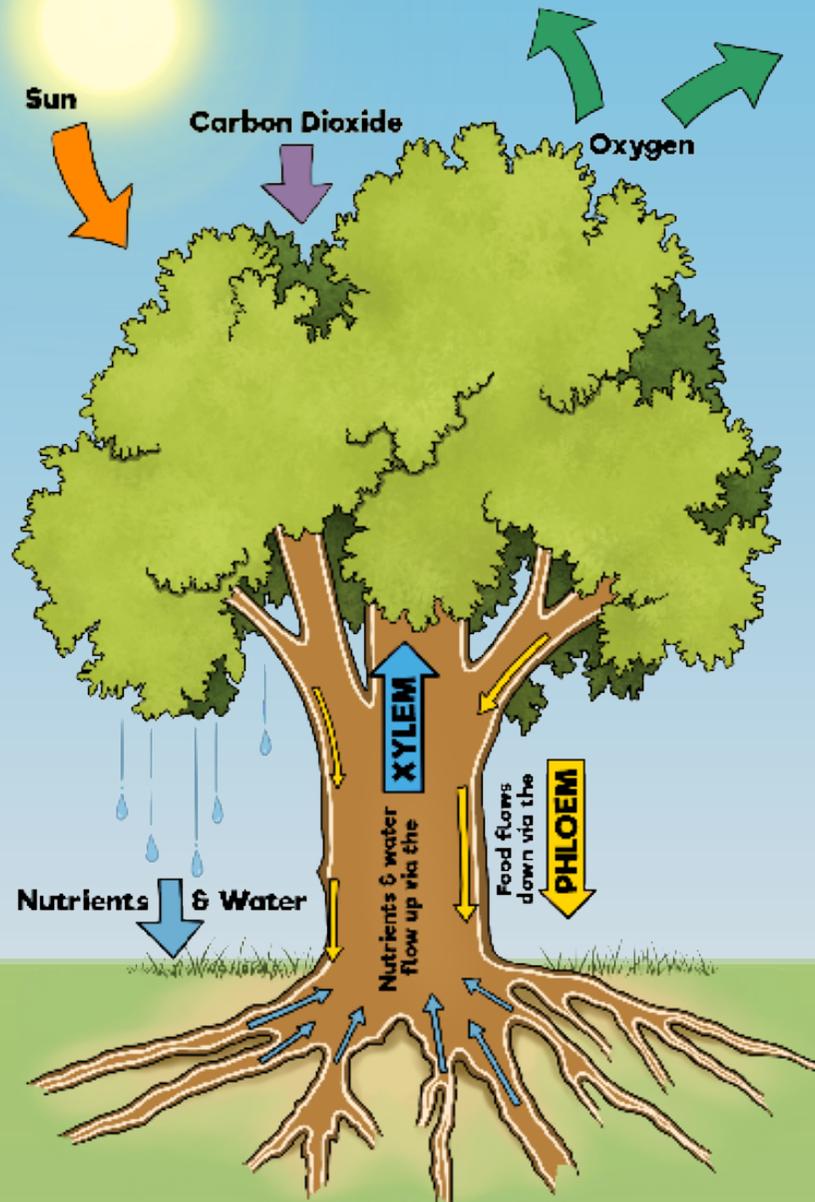
Sapling? ___

Tree? ___

Snag? ___

Fallen Log? ___

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.

● 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.

● 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 cap, and have a sweet taste, which makes them a favorite food for 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.

● American Holly (*Ilex opaca*)



As you walk down the trail, look for the sharp, spiny, evergreen leaves of the American holly. It is also known as the Christmas holly because the red fruits appear in winter and are used for Christmas decorations. If eaten, their berries can make people very sick but are a valuable winter food source for deer and a variety of bird species.

● 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 wood is used to make parts of guitars, banjos, drums, and other musical instruments because of its flexibility, sturdiness, and beautiful coloration.

● 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.

● Black Willow (*Salix nigra*)



The black willow is a medium-sized deciduous tree with a dark brown to blackish bark. It has long, thin leaves that are dark and shiny green on both sides. In early spring, small greenish yellow flowers will appear. Black willow lumber light weight and holds its shape well. It is often used in furniture.