

Seed? ☐ Seedling? ☐ Sapling? ☐ Tree? ☐ Snag? ☐ Fallen Log? ☐

Tree Cycle

Tree Cycle Checklist:
Can you find a...

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.

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.

TRACK your hike at kidsinparks.com and get **FREE** prizes!

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?

Thanks for joining us on the trail today! Visit our website to find more TRACK Trail™ adventures near you!

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

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY FOUNDATION

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina Foundation

The Need for Trees

Trees are very important to people, animals, insects, fungi, 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!

☐ Loblolly Pine

Pinus taeda



The loblolly pine is one of the most important lumber trees in the southeastern United States. The bark is brownish gray and scaly, and the needles are six to nine inches long in **fascicles** (bundles) of three. The cones are three to five inches long and prickly. Loblolly pine forests provide important habitat for deer, turkey and many other wild animals.

☐ Water Oak

Quercus nigra



True to its name, the water oak grows in wet, swampy areas. The leaves are long and usually have rounded lobes, shaped as if a drop of water is falling off the end of the leaf. The bark is smooth and brown on young trees, becoming rough and gray on older trees. Water oaks produce abundant acorns that are an important food source for squirrels and other animals.

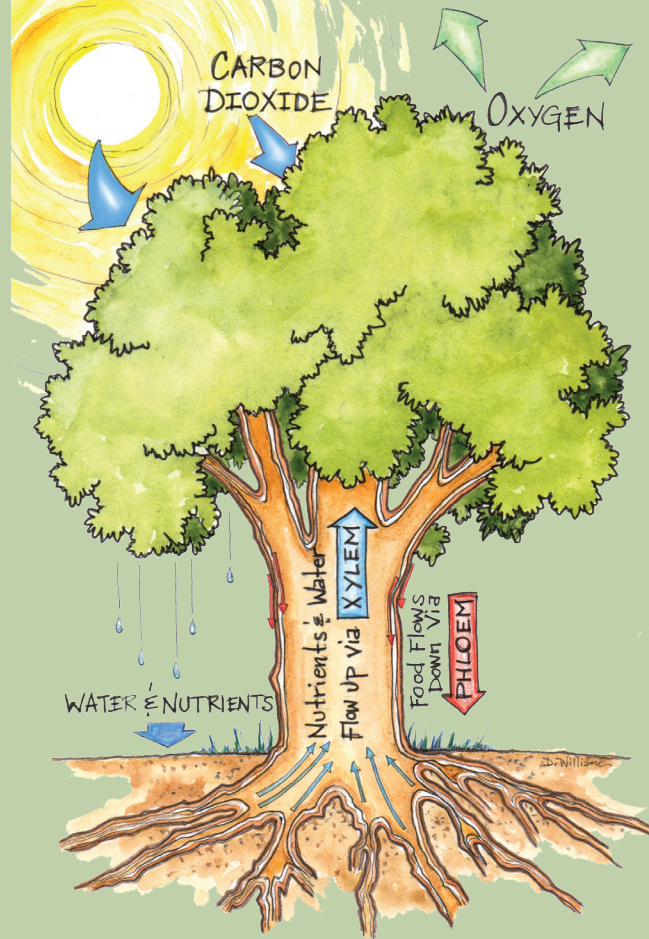
☐ Sweetgum

Liquidambar styraciflua



Sweetgum is a common tree in the southeastern United States, usually growing in areas with lots of sunlight. Sweetgums are easily recognized by their star-shaped leaves and spiky "gum-ball" fruits. The bark is gray-brown with furrows and narrow ridges. The seeds are eaten by songbirds, squirrels, and chipmunks. Sweetgum gets its name because people used to chew the hardened sap like gum.

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, Wingin' it Works

☐ 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.

☐ Sweetbay Magnolia

Magnolia virginiana



A popular ornamental and landscaping tree, the sweetbay magnolia has smooth gray bark, large evergreen leaves and fragrant white flowers. The tree is named for its sweet-scented, bay-like leaves. In the fall, sweetbay magnolias produce cone-shaped clusters of bright red fruits which are eaten by squirrels, mice and various songbirds.

☐ 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, the berries can make people very sick but are a valuable winter food source for deer and a variety of bird species.