

☐ **Cottonwood** (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*)



Cottonwood is the largest and fastest growing tree in South Dakota. The tree is native to moist soils along streams and wetlands throughout the state. In South Dakota, it is primarily used as a massive shade tree in riverside parks or other low, moist areas. Native Americans ate the young sprouts and inner bark because of its nutritive value and sweetness. The wood is used for making boxes, crates and pallets.

☐ **Pawpaw** (*Asimina triloba*)

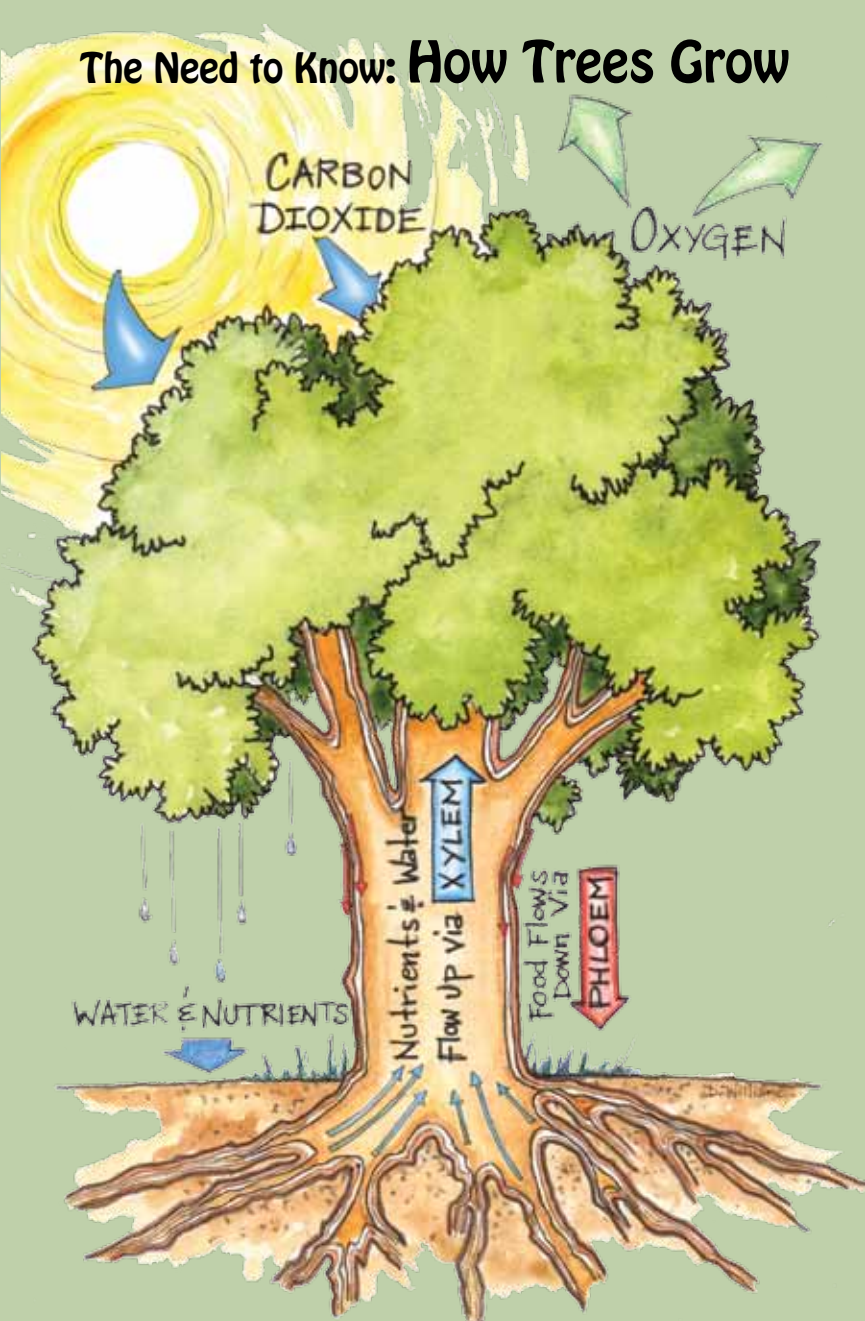


Pawpaw, or “custard apple,” is a small tree with light gray bark. It has large oval leaves with pointed tips. Pawpaw trees can be easily identified by their fruits, which look like short, plump bananas. Raccoons and even humans eat the fruit. Pawpaw is related to several tropical and sub-tropical plants that are important fruit crops.

☐ **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.



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

☐ **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.

☐ **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.

☐ **Devil’s Walking Stick** (*Aralia spinosa*)



The Devil’s Walking Stick is a spindly shrub with a trunk that is armed with sharp spines. Its rounded leaves have serrated edges, and grow in clusters of 4 to 5 pairs. In the summer, clusters of white flowers bloom to crown the plant. Then followed by a globular, black fruit. The flowers are very attractive to bees and other pollinators, while the fruit are favored by birds.

Can you find a...

Seed? _____

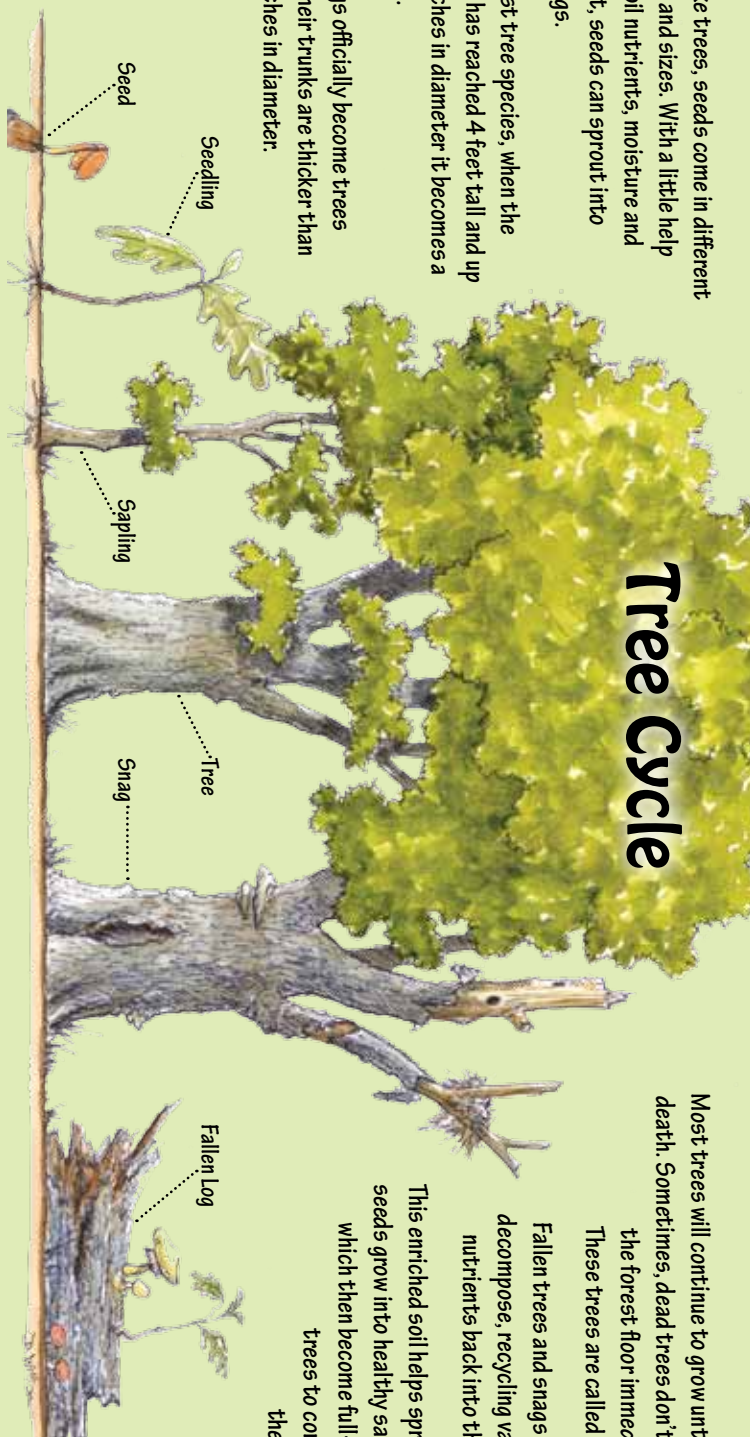
Seedling? _____

Sapling? _____

Tree? _____

Snag? _____

Fallen Log? _____



Tree Cycle

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 four inches in diameter.

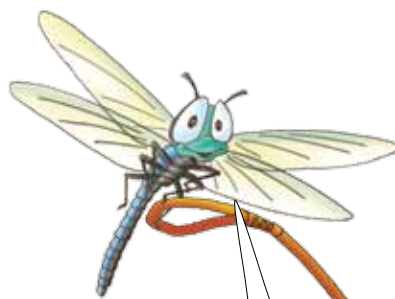
Most trees will continue to grow until their death. Sometimes, dead trees don't fall to the forest floor immediately.

These trees are called snags.

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.

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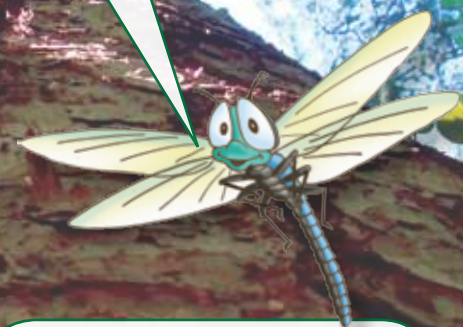
Kids in Parks Founding Partners



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!

