

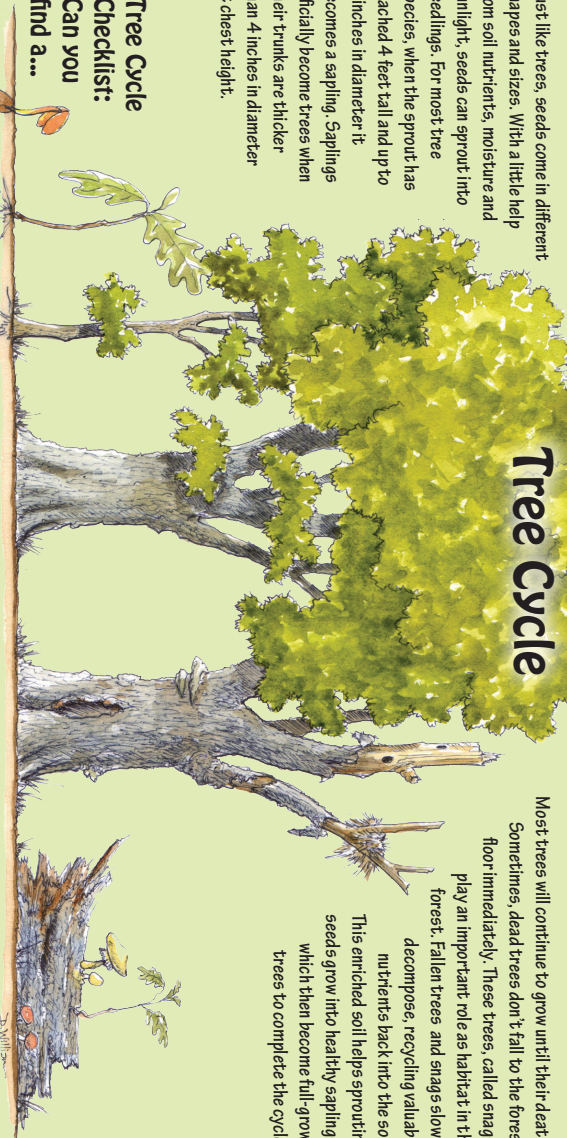
**Tree Cycle Checklist:**  
Can you find a...

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 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.



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# kidsinparks.com

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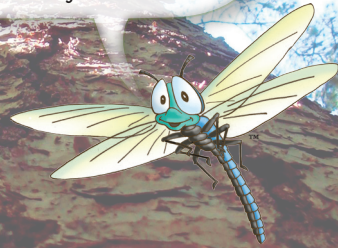







# The Need for Trees

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





## Eastern Red Cedar



The Eastern Red Cedar is actually in the juniper family and is not closely related to other cedars. Its tough, stringy bark and waxy, scaly needles are designed for survival in very dry conditions. The berries of the red cedar are an important food source for many songbirds. The wood is prized by builders for its rich red color, sweet smell, and weather-resistant properties.

## Flowering Dogwood



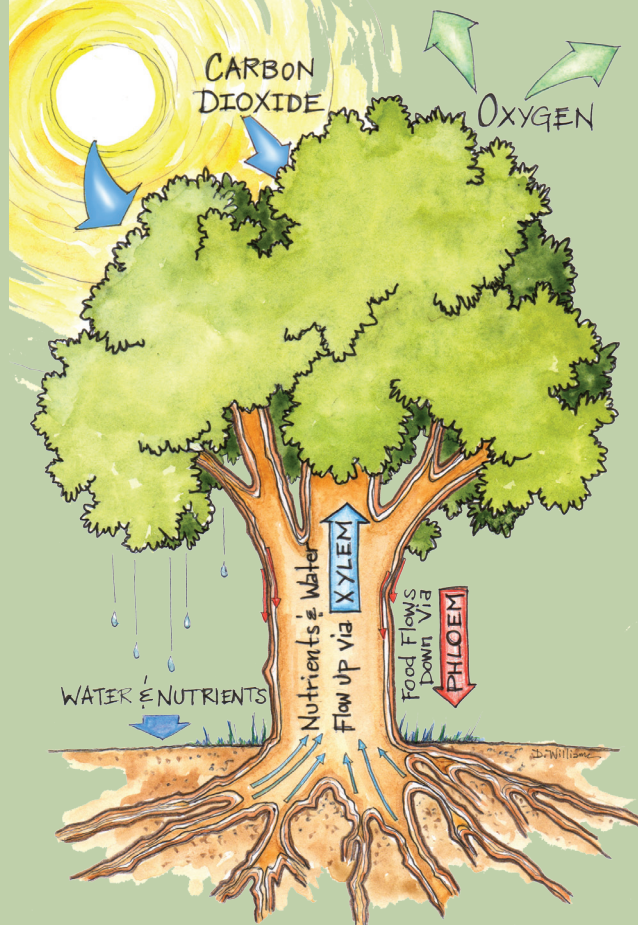
The flowering dogwood is a small tree that is abundant throughout the eastern United States. The bark of a dogwood has small cubic plates. The white "petals" of the dogwood flower are actually sepals (modified leaves), while the true flowers are the small yellow clusters in the middle. The buds look like gray-green chocolate chips. Dogwood trees were historically used to create quinine - a fever reducer.

## Shagbark Hickory



True to its name, the shagbark hickory has rough, shaggy bark that peels in long strips as the tree grows older. The leaves are compound (many leaflets on one stem), and the fruits (hickory nuts) are an important food source for squirrels, raccoons, turkeys, and many other animals. Native Americans used the wood to make their bows and harvested the nuts for food, as people still do today.

## 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

## Yellow Poplar



Growing straight and tall with a light gray bark and a large broad leaf that looks like the tip has been bitten off, the yellow poplar is easy to find. Due to its large size and straight growth, this tree provides a lot of useful lumber. Yellow 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.

## Sassafras



The sassafras is a small tree that can be easily identified by its three distinct leaf shapes (entire, mitten-shaped and three-lobed). Although the soft, brittle wood is of little value commercially, its resistance to rot makes it good for use as fence posts and outdoor furniture. In the past, people used the spicy-scented sap to flavor candy, tea and root beer. Their fruits are also a favorite food for many birds.

## Sweetgum



Sweetgum is a common tree in the Southeastern United States, usually growing in areas with lots of sunlight. Sweetgum trees are easily recognized by their star-shaped leaves and spiky fruits. The bark is grayish-brown with deep furrows and narrow ridges. The seeds are eaten by birds, squirrels, and chipmunks. Sweetgum got its name because people used to chew the hardened sap like gum.