



# 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!

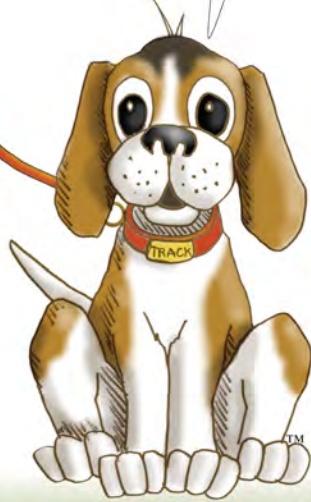


**TRACK** your hike at [kidsinparks.com](http://kidsinparks.com) and get **FREE** prizes!

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



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?



### Kids in Parks...

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



Kids in Parks Founding Partners



## 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.

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

Seed?

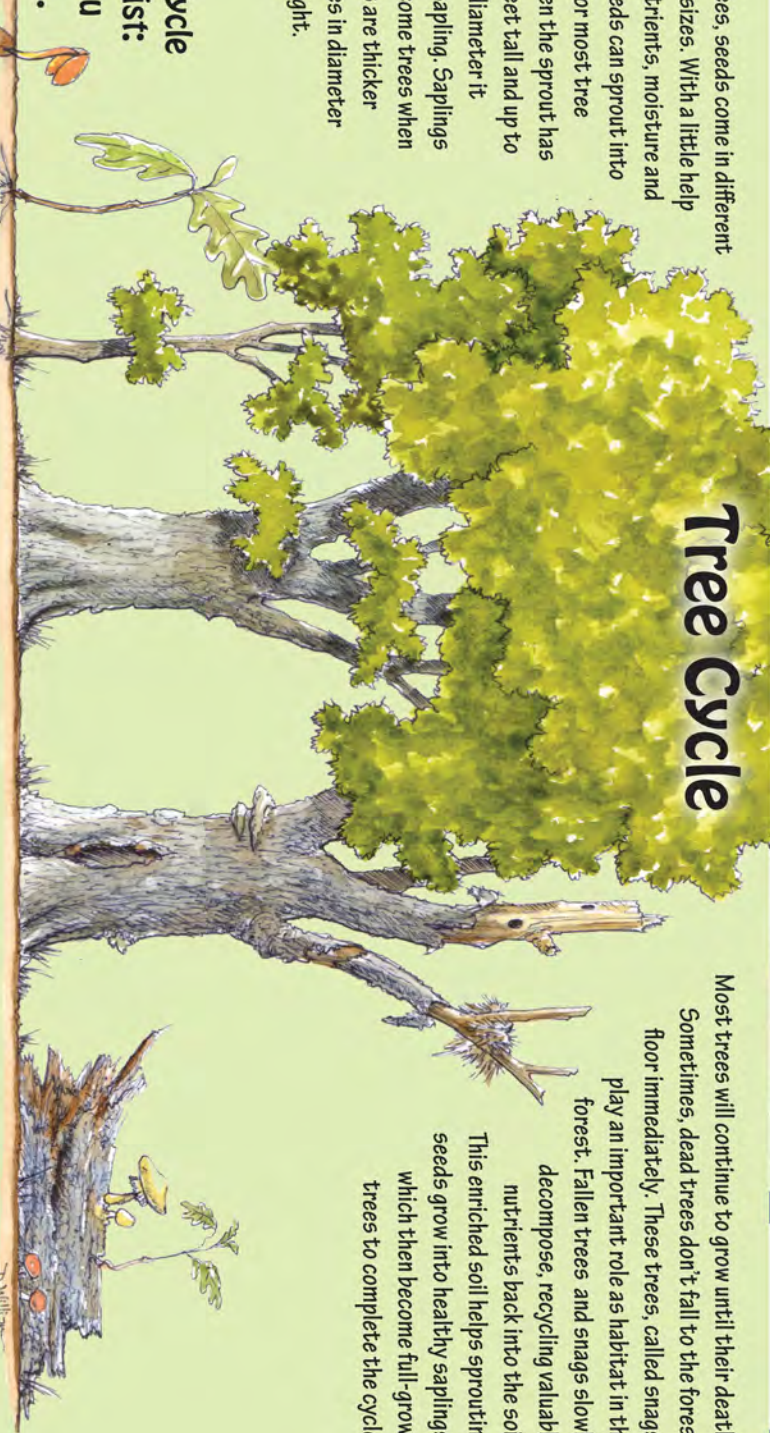
Seedling?

Sapling?

Tree?

Snag?

Fallen Log?



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.

## 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.

## White Oak



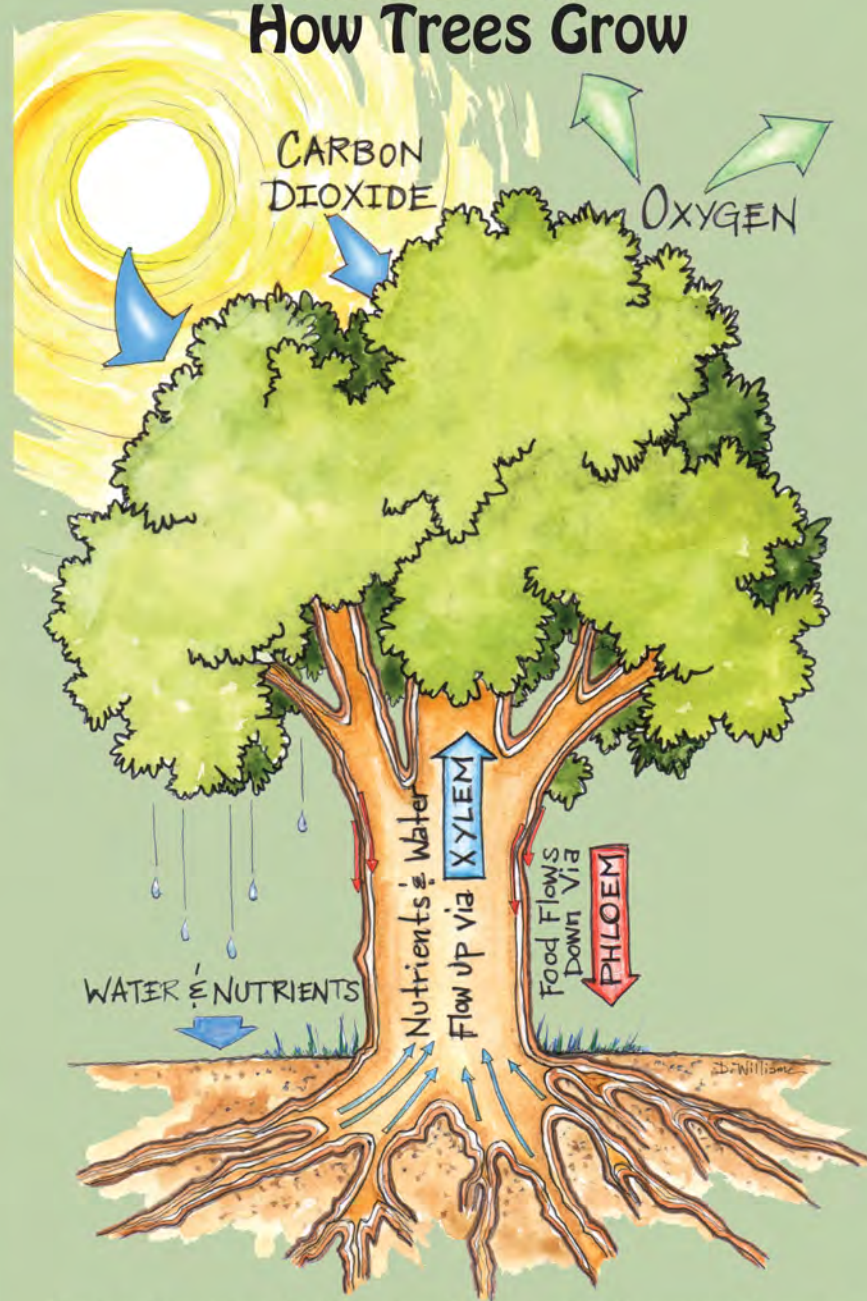
The leaves of the white oak have rounded lobes, and the bark is light gray and scaly on older trees. The acorns are elongated with a shallow cup, and have a sweet taste, which makes them a preferred food of deer, bear, turkeys, squirrels and other wildlife. Because of the water-tight quality of the wood, white oak was valued in olden times for shipbuilding, and is still used today to make barrels.

## Red Maple



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.

## 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

## Sourwood



Due to their deeply furrowed, chunky bark and curvy branch growth, sourwood trees are easy to find. In spring, their white flowers hang in clusters from the branch tips, and in fall the leaves turn crimson red. Sourwood lumber is of little value commercially, but sourwoods are an important source of nectar and pollen, which bees use to make a light-colored honey that is prized in the mountains.

## Pitch Pine



With thick "puzzle piece" bark plates, twisted needle leaves in **fascicles** (bundles) of three and prickly cones the size and shape of a chicken egg, the pitch pine is easy to identify. It gets its name from the sticky sap (pitch) found in its wood. This resin helps the wood resist decay and is used to make turpentine and aromatic products like pine cleaner.

## 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.