

Seed? _____ Seedling? _____ Sapling? _____ Tree? _____ Snake? _____ Fallen Log? _____

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.

Tree Cycle

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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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 the pictures and text in this brochure to identify and learn about trees. Just remember, for your safety, stay on the trail and be aware of your surroundings. Poison Ivy likes to climb up the trunks of trees too... so if you see a hairy vine, Don't Hug That Tree!

☐ Southern Red Oak



The southern red oak tree has dark brown bark with wide gray ridges. The leaves are shiny green and variable in shape, but usually have long pointed lobes and a distinctive bell shape at the base. The acorns are an important food source for squirrels, deer, turkeys, and many songbirds. Because of its large size and strong wood, southern red oak has long been used by humans for lumber and fuel.

☐ Bitternut Hickory



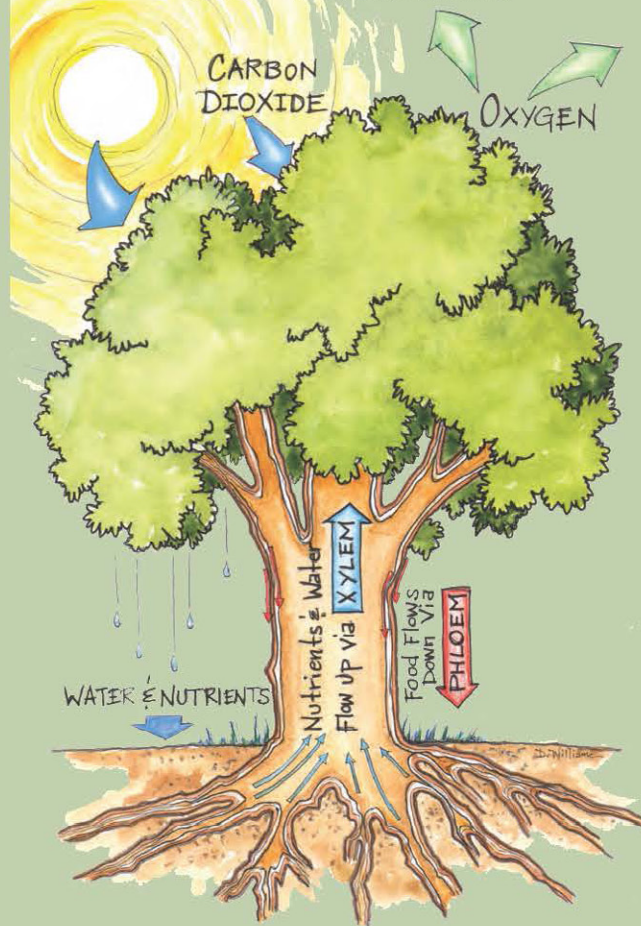
Bitternut hickory got its name because the nut has a bitter taste, and is not commonly eaten by humans or animals. The bark is light gray with shallow ridges that form a criss-cross pattern on older trees. The leaves are **compound** (7 to 9 leaflets on one stem). Hickory wood is used for building tools because of its strength. The wood is also popular for smoking meats and cheeses.

☐ Sycamore



The sycamore is a large, fast-growing tree that is easily recognized by its mottled bark, which peels off in large irregular sheets to reveal shades of white, green, yellow, and brown underneath. The sycamore is also known as the buttonwood tree because of its round, bristly fruits (often called "buttonballs"). Native Americans used sycamore trees to make a variety of medicines.

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, Wagon 'n' Works

☐ River Birch



River Birch got its name because it likes to grow near water. The gray-brown bark **exfoliates** (peels) in paper-like strips. The leaves are green on top and whitish on the bottom, with serrated edges. White-tailed deer eat the leaves and twigs, and birds and rodents eat the seeds. Birch sap can be boiled to make birch syrup, which is sweeter than maple syrup, but harder to produce in large quantities.

☐ Black Walnut



Black walnut trees grow best with lots of water and sunlight. They have dark brown or blackish bark and **compound leaves** (many leaflets on one stem). The nuts fall from the tree in autumn and are a favorite food of wild animals and humans alike, though removing the nut from the husk and shell is a rather messy and difficult process. Black walnut is also prized for its timber.

☐ Black Locust



Black locust has deeply furrowed bark with ridges that make a criss-cross pattern. The leaves are **compound** (many leaflets on one stem), and the twigs have paired thorns. Native Americans used the sturdy branches to make bows, and early farmers used the trunks for fence-posts. It was said that if you built your fence out of locust, it would stand for 100 years and then turn to stone.