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# 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!



☐ **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.

☐ **American Beech** (*Fagus grandifolia*)



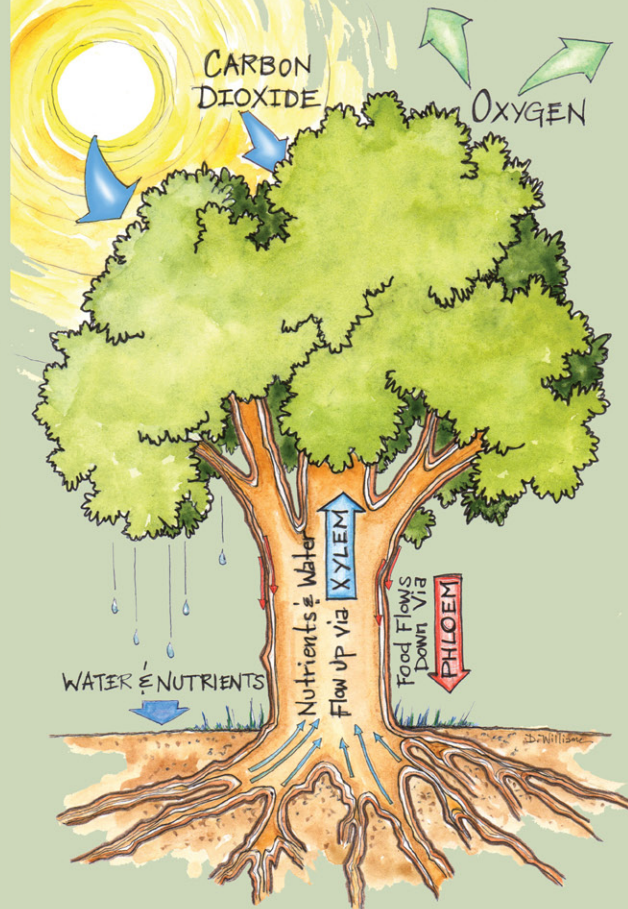
With its extremely smooth, light gray bark and leaves with serrated edges, the American beech is a very easy tree to identify. The fruits (beech nuts) are eaten by a large variety of birds and mammals, including ducks, blue jays, deer, black bears and foxes. Beech wood is used commercially for flooring, furniture, plywood, railroad ties, paper pulp and heating.

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

**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

☐ **River Birch** (*Betula nigra*)



River birch got its name because it grows 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.

☐ **White Oak** (*Quercus alba*)



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.

☐ **Northern Red Oak** (*Quercus rubra*)



The red oak tree has reddish brown bark with broad gray ridges which appear to have a shiny stripe down the center. The leaves are shiny green with pointed lobes, turning a rich red color in the fall. The acorns were boiled and eaten by Native Americans, and are an important food source for many birds and mammals. The red oak is one of the most important lumber trees in North America.