

Tree Cycle Check List: Can you find a... Seed? \_\_\_\_\_ Seedling? \_\_\_\_\_ Sapling? \_\_\_\_\_ Tree? \_\_\_\_\_ Snag? \_\_\_\_\_ Fallen Log? \_\_\_\_\_

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 rich soil helps seeds sprout, saplings survive and trees grow, completing the cycle.



## TRACK and KIP want You to become a Trail TRACKer

Thank you for joining us on the trail today. We want you to join the Trail **TRACKer** Team. It's fun, healthy and free. Best of all, by keeping TRACK of your trails on our website, you can earn prizes. For more information about the Trail TRACKer Team, other TRACK Trail adventures near you, or for general information about the Kids in Parks program, please visit our website at:

[www.kidsinparks.com](http://www.kidsinparks.com)

The TRACK Trail program is part of the larger **Kids in Parks** initiative sponsored by the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation. Working together with Pisgah National Forest, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the National Park Foundation and other partners throughout the community, our mission is to increase physical activity of children and their families, improve nutritional choices and get kids outdoors.

*Kids in Parks...  
for the Health of our Kids, our Communities and our Mountains.*



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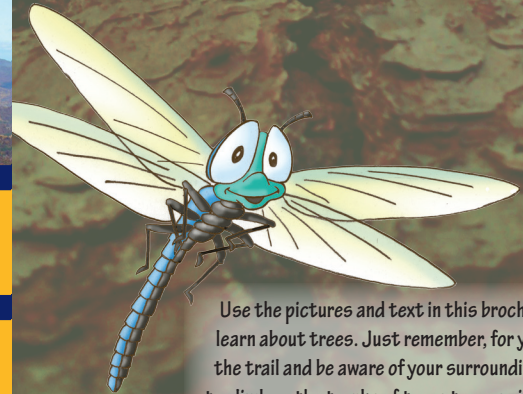
BlueCross BlueShield of North Carolina Foundation

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# PISGAH NATIONAL FOREST'S THE NEED FOR TREES

Everything needs trees: people, animals, insects, fungus... even other trees. Because trees provide so many things for people and for the forest, including shelter, habitat, food and oxygen, we all have a need for trees. This TRACK Trail Adventure will help you identify six of the most common trees found in the Blue Ridge Mountains and Pisgah National Forest.



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!

## AMERICAN BEECH



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

## YELLOW POPLAR



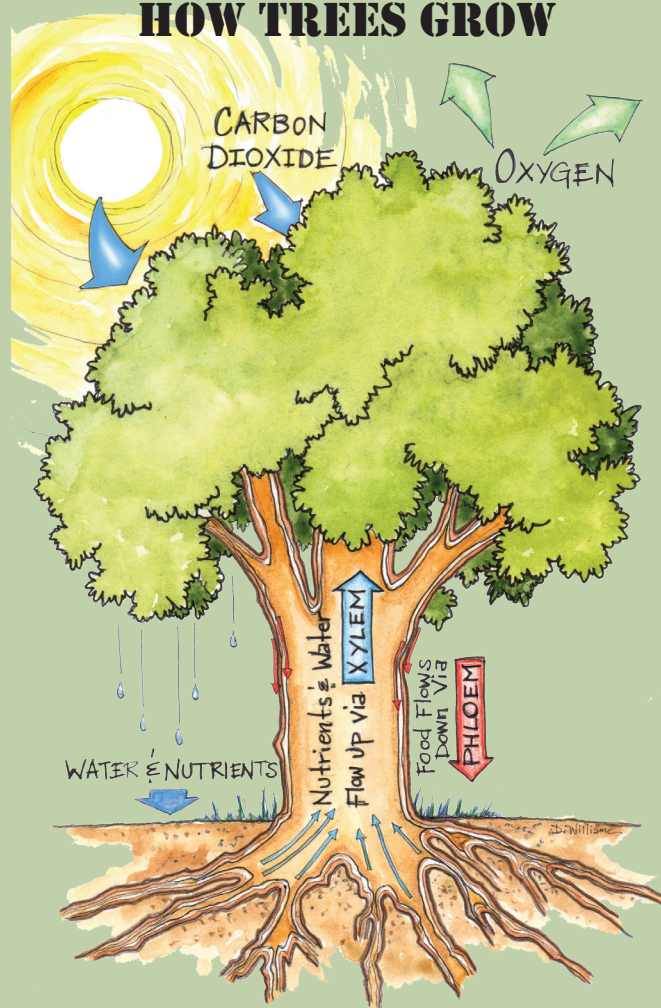
Growing straight and tall with a light gray bark and a large broad leaf whose tip appears to have been bitten off, the yellow poplar is easy to find. Due to its large size and straight growth, this tree provides a lot of useful lumber. Yellow poplars also have a high value as a honey tree, with one tree being able to produce enough nectar in one season for bees to make 4 pounds of honey.

## WHITE PINE



With their extremely straight trunks, needle leaves in bundles (fascicles) of five and long skinny cones, the Eastern white pine is easy to identify. The white pine has long been used as a source of food and medicine. The needles are high in vitamin C and are used to make tisane, an herbal tea. Deer and rabbits eat the foliage and songbirds and mice graze on the seeds.

## 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 is then distributed by way of its phloem to the rest of the tree, so it can grow.

Illustrations drawn by David Williams

## AMERICAN HOLLY



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.

## RED MAPLE



One of the most abundant and widespread trees in eastern North America, the red maple can be found everywhere. With red twigs, buds, flowers and seeds, and leaves usually turning red in autumn, it's easy to see how the red maple got its name. Because of its brilliant autumn hues, it is often used in landscaping for shade and fall color.

## SOURWOOD



Due to its deeply furrowed, chunky bark and curvy branch growth, sourwoods are easy to find. In spring, its white flowers hang from its branch tips, and in fall its leaves turn crimson red. Because of its curvy growth, the wood from sourwood trees is of little value commercially, however, the tree is prized as a valuable source of honey in the mountains.