

# The Need for Trees



Trees are very important to people, animals, insects, fungi, and even other trees. 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!



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



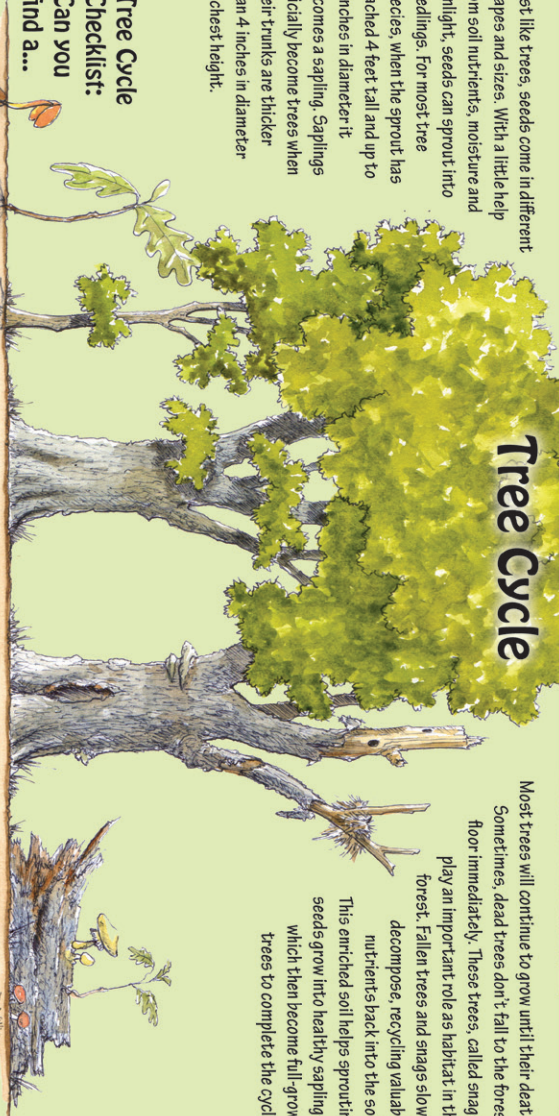
**TRACK** your hike at [kidsinparks.com](http://kidsinparks.com) and get **FREE** prizes!

## 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.



☐ **Bald Cypress** (*Taxodium distichum*)



Look for stringy, reddish bark with ridges in a criss-cross pattern. Many bald cypress trees have a wide trunk base for stability during floods. Unlike most conifers, bald cypress trees shed their leaves each winter. Unique to bald cypress, "knees" are roots that have grown upward above the ground and may help anchor the trees in soft soil. Bald cypress trees cause floodwaters to slow down and help trap pollutants.

☐ **Loblolly Pine** (*Pinus taeda*)



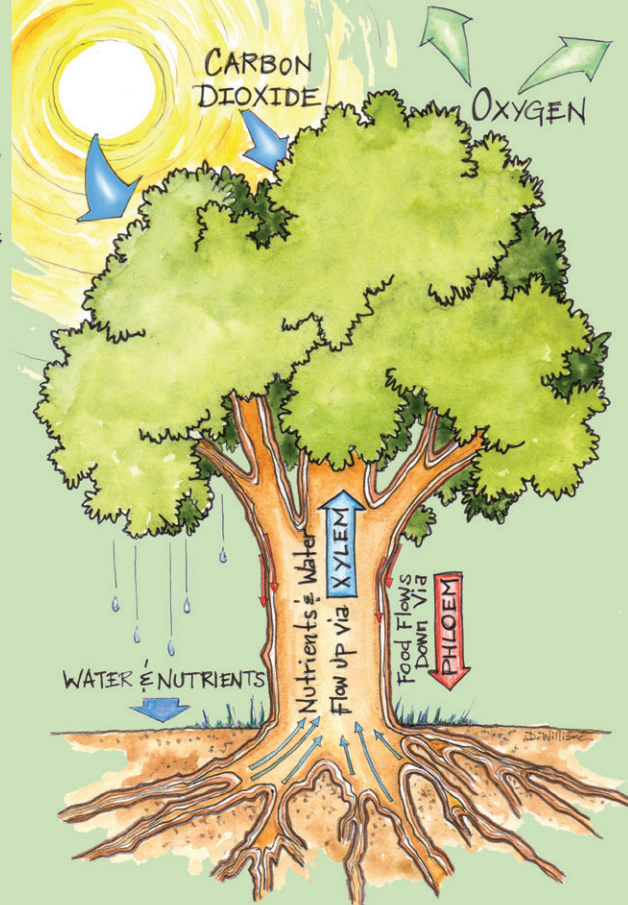
Unlike most pines, loblolly pines can handle living in wet conditions. The bark is thick, scaly, and dark gray. The needles are in bundles of three and are about six to seven inches long. The pine cones are about the size of an orange, dull brown, and prickly. Seeds of loblolly pine are eaten by many animals including mice, squirrels and birds. Loblolly pines are a prized source of lumber in the Southeastern U.S.

☐ **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 seeds of beech trees (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.

## 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

☐ **Water Tupelo** (*Nyssa aquatica*)



Water tupelo trees only grow in areas where water is plentiful. They have brownish gray bark with scaly or blocky ridges. Many water tupelo trees have a wide trunk base for stability during floods. Honey bees make honey from the small, greenish white flowers that bloom in the spring. The reddish brown fruits are one inch long and are eaten by a wide variety of wildlife.

☐ **Pawpaw** (*Asimina triloba*)



Pawpaw, or "custard apple," is a small tree with light gray bark. It has large oval leaves with pointed tips. Pawpaw trees can be easily identified by their fruits, which look like short, plump bananas. Raccoons and even humans eat the fruit. Pawpaw is related to several tropical and sub-tropical plants that are important fruit crops.

☐ **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 holiday 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.