



Leaf Track Tracings

Activity Summary

Location:

A trail close to your home where you can find some leaves on the ground.

Time required:

5 minutes-1/2 hour

Materials:

Paper, a pencil and some masking tape.

Set-up:

There is no set-up required for this activity. However, finding a close trail to your home will make this activity much more enjoyable and easy for you.

Purpose:

Discover the different patterns of leaves; learn basic plant identification techniques, and mostly get outside and have some fun!

Lobed



Entire



Compound



Introduction

When we walk in the forest, we leave tracks showing we were there. Even though trees can't walk, they leave tracks too. One tree track is from its leaves. In the fall and winter, many trees drop a trace of their presence that we can all see...leaves. Leaves are great for piling up and jumping in, feeding your garden, and for creating a chance for you and your child to have some fun and get outside. This is a great activity to do in the fall when the leaves are starting to fall, but it can be done anytime of year.

Directions

Parents and kids here is your chance to become a Leaf Tracker. Go for a hike and find at least five different leaves on the ground. Look for ones that have different shapes, patterns, and sizes. They should not be so dry that they are crumbly or the activity will not work. As you pick up the leaves, look up to see if you can tell which tree they came from. Are there still any leaves hanging on the tree itself to help you? If not, how might you be able to help figure out which tree the leaf came from?

As you walk along, notice the different patterns, shapes, sizes and colors of the leaves on the ground. When leaves fall off the tree onto the ground in the fall, the tree is called *deciduous*. When the tree holds tightly onto its leaves through the winter, it is called an *evergreen* tree.

Once you return home, take your leaves and lay them on a piece of paper on a flat surface (the floor or a table will work just fine). Place a small piece of tape along the top and bottom edge of the leaf. You want to keep the leaf from moving around as you complete the rubbing. Place a second piece of paper over top of the leaf and tape it down along the edges as well. The tape is not necessary, but for little hands it will make the job easier. Then take a pencil and lightly rub it on the paper over where the leaf lays. What slowly appears is the outline of the leaf including all of its veins and edges.

After completing the rubbings, lay the pictures side-by-side. Notice the different shapes and sizes of the leaves? There are three basic leaf shapes that you can use to you help you identify which tree produced the leaves. The key provided to the left can help you decide which leaf shapes you have.

Extensions

You can create a Nature Journal for your child by simply using a small spiral bound notebook for the leaf rubbings. This project and others can be done in that notebook allowing you to keep track of all your Parker Play on the Parkway Projects. For some added color and variation, you can also use colored construction paper and chalk to do the rubbings.