



LESSON SUMMARY

To give students an opportunity to recognize that leaves come in different shapes and sizes and that these characteristics can help to identify the tree.

Activity Information

Estimated Duration: 1 to 2 hours

Materials: Leaves from four or five different kinds of trees around the schoolyard (one of each leaf type per group of five students), paper, tape, laminating materials (optional)

Setting: Indoors and outdoors

Key Vocabulary: Leaf margin, leaf veins, lobe



Forest Facts

- More than 180 different species of native trees grow in Canada. The leaves of each species can be distinguished by their size, shape, colour, leaf margin (or edge), texture, vein pattern, and arrangement on the twig.
- Because leaves are so easily observed, they are the tool most commonly used to identify trees.
- Visit www.focusonforests.ca for more facts about different trees in Canada, and facts about identifying different types of trees.

ACTIVITY

1. Collect leaves (either deciduous or evergreen) from four or five different kinds of trees around the schoolyard. (Encourage students to collect fallen leaves.) Collect one of each kind per group of five students (so that each group will have four or five different leaves). Collect pine needles as they occur naturally – that is in bunches of two or five.
2. Select one of each kind of leaf to be used as a classroom sample. Tape each sample leaf onto a separate piece of paper. Post these in different places around the room.
3. Give each group a set of the leaves. Have students generate questions that will help them observe their leaves, such as:
 - Are the leaf margins pointed, smooth, or wavy?
 - Does the leaf have any tiny hairs on the underside?
 - How are they attached to the twig?
 - How many needles are in each cluster?
 - Are the needles hard and pointy or are they soft?
 - Can you see and feel the veins?
4. Challenge each group to match their leaves to the leaf samples posted around the room. Have the students tape the leaf beside the matching sample. Have students list the characteristics that helped them match their leaf. Go on to the next leaf. At the conclusion of the exercise, review the results as a class. Are all the leaves correctly matched?
5. Take your students on an outdoor walk to locate the trees from which the leaves came. Examine both the individual leaves and the tree as a whole. What characteristics distinguish each leaf from the others?

Extension

Have your students think up as many adjectives as they can to describe the leaves used in the activity (e.g., “pointy” pine, “scaly” cedar).

Teaching Note

Leaves can be laminated and used repeatedly over the years. Encourage students to add to the class leaf collection by bringing in leaves from home gardens and woodlots. Remind them to collect fallen leaves if possible.