

Camptown Nature 101

Trees Series – Day 1 – Tree ID

Host: Trey Clayton



1. Tree ID

Common Midwest trees: The host will identify and discuss several varieties of common Midwest/Eastern U.S. hardwood trees and three simple ways to help figure out what kind of tree it is. Trees we might find are oak, walnut, hickory, sycamore, beech, maple, sweet gum, or poplar. Below are some easy trees to identify. You can also check out a multitude of tree ID apps on your phone.

Oak can come in many varieties. They come with varying bark types but can easily be identified by their uniquely shaped leaves. You can find these on the tree or on the ground for most of the year. You'll often find their seeds, called 'acorns,' on the ground around them. These are important food for wildlife like deer and wild turkeys.

Walnut trees are characterized by dark, chunky bark and what are called 'compound leaves.' Compound leaves are like leaf clusters instead of individually placed leaves. You'll also know a walnut tree is nearby by their seeds (walnuts) on the ground. These are also an important food source for wildlife.

Hickory comes in a few styles but the easiest to pick out is the shagbark hickory. While you can ID this tree by hickory nuts on the ground around it, the 'shaggy' bark is the simplest characteristic to use." Hickory trees also have a compound leaf structure.

Sycamore trees are one of the easiest trees to find in Indiana. They almost always grow exclusively near water sources and they look white and 'sickly' at the top. We can remember 'syc'amores are 'sickly' looking." Sycamore trees can also have really big leaves the size of a dinner plate!

Beech trees are another easy tree to identify. They like high, drier places to grow and produce beech nuts. They can be found by looking for trees with silver, smooth bark.

Sweet gums aren't really that sweet, nor are their seeds if you have one of these in the yard because they make a big mess. Their seeds are round and covered in pointy spikes. You can also identify them through their star-shaped leaves.

Poplar trees, or in this case, tulip poplars are identifiable in a few ways. They are usually very straight and tall trees, some of the biggest in the forest when they are grown up. They get 'tulip' flowers on them and their leaves are shaped like a flat 'tulip' you would see growing out of the ground. The tulip poplar is our state tree!

Activity: Go out to your yard or a local park and see how many trees you can find. Remember, most local parks that have a nature center will have a Tree ID map or trail; we have included a copy of a tree trail map from Cool Creek Park. Make the following observations about *each* tree. Try to find at least five (5) different trees:

1. How would you describe the bark? Be creative with your observations and use plenty of *adjectives*. Remember, *adjectives* are words that describe something.
2. Is the tree very tall or very short, or somewhere in the middle?
3. Draw the shape of a leaf from the tree.