

Activity

The trees around us

MATERIALS

- Pencils
- Cameras
- Clipboards
- One copy per team, or one mobile device (e.g., tablet) per team on which the following webpage from *Trees Inside Out* from the Montreal Botanical Garden will be accessed: <https://www.aucoeurdelarbre.ca/en/branching-out/identify-trees-nomenclature.php> (or any other tree identification key)
- Photocopies of the leaf types handout (p. 3)

DURATION

TWO SESSIONS, 60-MINUTES EACH

Activity Summary

During a walk in the park, students will observe different types of trees and their characteristics: their leaves, bark, the space they occupy, their height and width. Students will use their observations to try to identify the types of each tree using their identification keys. The objective of this activity is to introduce students to scientific observation and the use of identification keys, as well as to take inventory of the different natural species in their environment.

This activity takes place in two steps. The first step consists of practicing using an identification key, and the second step involves an outing in the park to take inventory of the trees around school.

Preparation

- Familiarize yourself with the document *Trees Inside Out* from the Montreal Botanical Garden: <https://www.aucoeurdelarbre.ca/en/branching-out/identify-trees-nomenclature.php>
 - Optionally, you may choose to print out one copy per team or reserve a tablet per team to take with you outside.
- Take a photo of a tree near your school, as well as photos of its leaves to use as examples in class.
- You can identify each tree beforehand using the free version of the app *PictureThis*.



Steps

- A.** **Tell students:**
- *We will go to the park to take inventory of the trees there. We will share this task as a team, but to do so we first must be able to identify the different types of trees.*

Show students the photos of the tree you will use as an example.

Explain to students that they will be using a tree identification key. To use a tree identification key, one must know the vocabulary used in botany to describe the leaves. Distribute the **Leaf Type handout** (p. 3) to students and review each term with them.

- Ask students:**
- *What is the main difference between a simple leaf and a composite leaf? What is a branch? How are alternate leaves and opposite leaves placed?*

Show students the **Trees Inside Out** webpage on screen, and review the steps of identification. Use your photos of the tree to identify its type.

Ask students: *What is the difference between a deciduous tree and a coniferous tree?*

Distribute a copy of the Montréal Botanical Garden's *Trees Inside Out* webpage per team, or have teams access this webpage on their mobile device.

Let's walk to the park

- B.** At the park, each team will head to their assigned area.

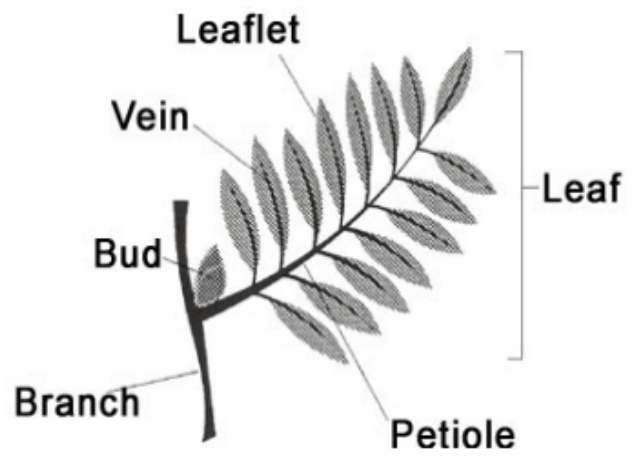
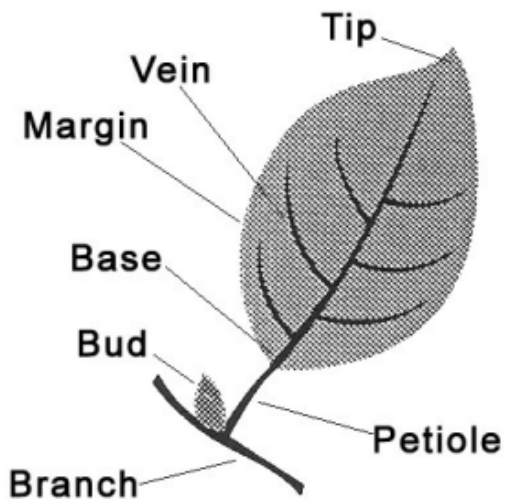
Tell students:
Photograph the trees in your area. Photograph the leaves on the trees, too. Use an identification key to determine the information that will help you identify its type.

RETURN
TO GROUP

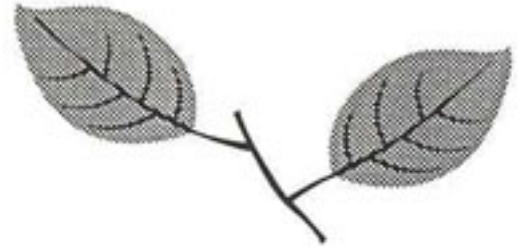
- Were you able to identify all the trees?
- Are there any trees you could not identify?
- What could we do to learn the names of these trees?

REINVESTMENT:

Put together a giant map of the park and place the photos of the trees and their leaves on it. Write the name of the tree under its photo. Display this giant map in a common area of the school. It is possible to adapt this activity to study other living beings: herbaceous plants, insects, etc.



Opposite leaves



Alternate leaves



Simple leaf



Composite leaf