

# Merkle Wildlife Sanctuary

Full In The Summer

Bare In The Fall

Habitat For All

## Poplar Springs Trail Bonus Quest

There are several different methods used in identifying trees, varying depending on the time of the year. You may only need to use one method to identify a tree, but combining several methods can help you be more accurate in identifying different trees in a diverse forest! There are two general categories of trees: deciduous and coniferous. Deciduous trees, like oaks and maples, drop their leaves in the fall and are dormant through the winter. Coniferous trees, like pines, keep their leaves or needles all year round, and are commonly known as “evergreens”.



1. The simplest method of identifying a tree would be to look at its leaves. The shape, size, and color of the leaf is unique to each tree species! The position of the leaves on the branch are another important feature to help identify trees. Coniferous trees, like pines and hemlocks, have needles, which are a modified leaf designed to help reduce the tree’s water loss. These sorts of trees can commonly be

found in areas of higher elevation or colder temperatures.

2. This is a holly tree, the leaves of this tree are simple, meaning that there is one leaf per stem, are ovular in shape with pointed spines, and are a shiny dark green in color. Holly trees are evergreens, meaning that they are green and possess leaves all year round.





3. Another method of identify trees is to look at the bark. Some trees have smooth bark, others have rougher bark or bark that peels off in strips. There can also be variation in color or pattern of the bark of the tree.

4. This is a beech tree. Beech trees have very smooth bark that is light grey in color with darker grey spots. Another distinct feature of beech trees is their roots. Beech trees have large networks of shallow, spreading roots beginning at the base of the tree.

5. Trees can be identified by their buds, which are only visible in early spring before the leaves fully unfold. Oak trees have a large amount of buds at the ends of their branches that are reddish in color and have a conical shape, while tulip poplars have light green duck-billed shaped buds.



Oak Tree Buds



6. The branches of a tree are another identifying feature. The pattern, orientation, spacing, and location of the branches lead to a distinct visual profile of a tree. Tulip poplars, for example, only have branches at the top of the tree in a round or conical shape, and are on average 70 to 100 feet tall.

Using what you've learned about identifying some of our native trees, see if you can identify any of these trees as you walk the rest of the trail. Learning about the differences between tree species helps you pay attention to the little details that you might not have noticed otherwise!