

Connecting Kids to Nature

Nature is a great teacher! Try this outdoor activity - it's safe, fun, and educational. Project Learning Tree® activities build children's creative and critical thinking skills while they learn what the environment needs to remain healthy and sustainable.

Activity 78: Signs of Fall

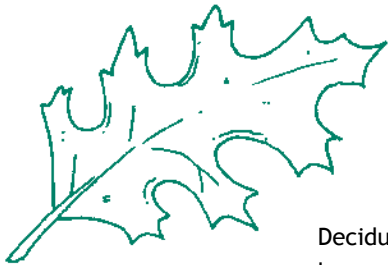
In this activity, children look for signs of autumn. They observe the annual change of seasons, and investigate why leaves of deciduous trees change color in the fall.

Doing the Activity

As autumn approaches, take children on a walk through a wooded area, schoolyard, local park, or neighborhood sidewalk to look for signs of fall. Point out the differences between *deciduous* and *evergreen* trees. Have children find at least five of each and collect sample leaves. Create leaf rubbings by covering a leaf with a piece of paper and rubbing a crayon over it. The leaf's margin and veins will appear. Use crayons to match the fall colors found in the leaves. Encourage critical thinking by asking:

- What signs of fall can you see in the trees and on the ground?
- How many different leaf colors can you find?
- What will happen to the leaves?

Deciduous



Deciduous trees lose their leaves annually. Example: Oak



Evergreen

Evergreen trees keep their leaves (needles) year-round. Example: Pine

Have children use the colorful fall leaves to create a picture. For ideas, see *Leaf Man* by Lois Ehlert, published by Harcourt Children's Books, 2005, ISBN: 0152053042.

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Adapted from Activity 78: Signs of Fall from Project Learning Tree's PreK-8 *Environmental Education Activity Guide*.

Why Do Leaves Change Color?

With fall's colder temperatures and shorter days, the cells of deciduous tree leaves begin to die. The dead cells block water and nutrients from the leaf. Chlorophyll, the green pigment in the leaves, breaks down and the yellow and red pigments begin to show through.

Native Americans had legends to explain the fall colors. Invite children to create their own imaginative stories.

PLT improves children's environmental awareness, critical thinking skills, and academic performance.

- Attend a workshop near you to receive PreK-12 PLT activities, ideas, and materials.
- Encourage your child's school to incorporate outdoor learning and PLT.
- Learn more at www.plt.org or call 202-765-3641

www.plt.org



Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is a program of the American Forest Foundation.