

Connecting Kids to Nature

Nature is a great teacher and getting kids outside to learn and play is good for their brains and their bodies. Try this outdoor activity from Project Learning Tree® - it's safe, fun, and educational!

Looking at Leaves

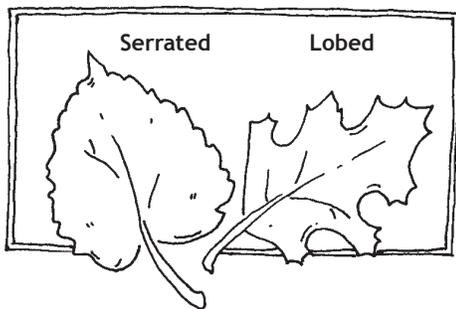
In this activity, children will take a closer look at leaves and find out more about leaf characteristics and how leaves can be used to identify plants.

The next time you are in a forested area, have children collect leaves of various shapes, sizes, and colors from the ground. Conduct a comparison investigation by asking:

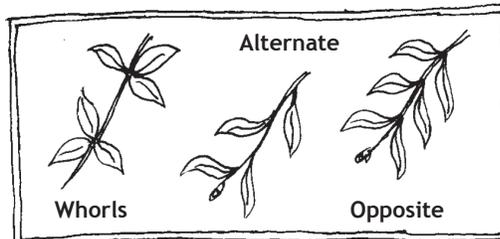
- What differences and similarities can you see?
- What do the leaves feel like? Do they have hairs? Or teeth?
- Can you find the tree that each leaf came from?

Explain that leaves can be used to identify trees. Use a field guide to identify a tree. Find a leaf from that tree, and compare the leaf structure described in the field guide to the real-life specimen you found on the ground. How many other trees can you find with this same type of leaf?

Leaf Margins



Leaf Arrangements



The edges or margins of leaves can provide clues to the tree's identity. Another characteristic to identify a tree is the way its leaves are arranged on the twigs. Even needle leaves grow in patterns. For example, leaves on pines may grow in clusters of two, three, or more.

Have children make prints of the leaves they collect. To make a leaf crayon rubbing, place a leaf on a smooth, hard surface, vein side up, and cover it with a piece of paper. Rub a crayon back and forth across the paper, directly above the leaf. What do you see? The leaf's margin and veins will appear on the paper as you rub.

Make Learning Fun!

Encourage your child's school to incorporate learning outdoors.

For more activity ideas and materials:

- Attend a PLT workshop, www.plt.org/state-network/
- Visit shop.plt.org



Project Learning Tree®
(PLT) is an initiative
of the Sustainable
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