Tree Cookies

One way to learn about tree growth is to look at annual rings. Tree rings show patterns of change in a tree’s life as well as changes in the area where it grows. In this activity, you can trace environmental and historical changes using a cross section of a tree, or “tree cookie.”

Have you ever counted tree rings? Every growth season, a tree adds a new layer of wood to its trunk and limbs. This means you can determine the age of a tree by counting its layers, or rings. Have children learn more about a tree’s life by examining a tree cookie and asking:

- How old was this part of the tree when the tree cookie was cut?
- Can you see different markings? Evidence of scars or narrow, misshapen rings?
- What might have happened to the tree to cause these different markings?

Use a hand lens to get a closer look at the tree cookie’s texture. Can you see any holes or channels that might allow water and nutrients to travel up the tree? Finally, ask children to draw a tree cookie the same age as themselves. What can they do to show when important events in their lives took place?


Do this word search puzzle to discover some components of trees and forest cycles. Look below for the answers.

```
H M Z E S B M I L T F
G E C F D T C A K L B
E T A M I L C N X A I
S H M R G R U E R U S
A G B P T R E K S N G
E U I H T W O R G N N
S O U P H L O E M A I
I R M S A P W O O D R
D D X Y L E M Z D W R
```

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

©Sustainable Forestry Initiative Inc. Adapted from Activity 76: Tree Cookies from Project Learning Tree’s *PreK-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide.*