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!

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.

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 Tree Leaf]

Deciduous trees lose their leaves annually. Example: Oak

Evergreen

![Evergreen Tree Needle]

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

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.

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

www.plt.org

Project Learning Tree®

(PLT) is an initiative of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.