



Activity 12: What Can I Learn from a Leaf?

Can an Alberta tree be identified using only a small sample of branch and leaf?

Materials

- **ID a Tree website**

<http://extension.illinois.edu/trees3/lab.html>

- **Alberta Forest Council Alberta's Trees website**

<http://abtreegene.com/albertas-trees/>

- **VTree ID Leaf Key**

<http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/syllabus/key/location.htm>

- **Grade 6 Trees and Forest Class**

<https://mrsanheliger.weebly.com/trees-and-forests.html>

- small samples of branches from local trees

Instructions

1. Train yourself to use a dichotomous key. The best way to do this is through practice. Visit the *ID a Tree* website. Give careful attention to the instructions, and be sure you take samples of all the trees available in the forest scene. If you do not identify a sample properly, keep trying until you get it right. Remember that this is practice!
2. You must become familiar with Alberta trees. Visit the *Alberta Forest Council Alberta's Trees* website. Fifteen tree species are native to Alberta. Read the information on the website carefully, and study the tree samples so that you have a good working knowledge of Alberta trees.
3. Now you are ready to identify tree samples. If you are near an area with trees, have an adult take you there and collect small samples of branches from various trees (a 10 cm piece with a few leaves on it will do fine.) Try to find four different trees from which to collect samples. (It is okay if you can find only one or two). Remember to take small samples - do not damage any tree unnecessarily. If you cannot obtain any samples, work through Step 4 using the virtual samples on the Alberta Forest Council Alberta's Trees (website).
4. You can take a rubbing of the leaf by placing a piece of paper over the leaf and gently

rubbing with a crayon or pastel.

5. Visit the *VTree ID Leaf Key* website. Use the key to identify your tree samples. Start by selecting "Alberta" from the top pull-down menu, and then click 'Go'. After that, compare your sample carefully to the choices presented. Select the right one. Repeat the process until you have identified your tree samples.

6. Challenge!

You can test your ability to use keys by extending your sampling to include shrubs as well as trees.

Repeat Step 3 above, but include shrubs in your samples. Use the *Guide to the Common Native Trees and Shrubs of Alberta* website to assist you in your identifications.

<http://www.insideeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/TreeShrub.pdf>

Drawing or rubbing of a Leaf	Name