

# Trees of Canada

by Susan Muehlherr

**A**lthough they are not animals, trees are things about which Scouts should know something. Very often a Scout has to describe country which he has seen, and if he says it is 'well-wooded' it would often be of great importance that the reader of his report should know what kind of trees the woods were composed of. – *B.P., Campfire Yarn #10, Scouting For Boys, Edition 2004 (first printed in 1908).*

Cubs and Scouts are required to identify trees and shrubs as part of their badge program. The easiest way to identify trees is by their leaves, but wouldn't you like to be able to look at a tree and know immediately what kind it is? It is possible to identify trees by their features: leaves, bark, shape, twigs, buds, flowers and fruits. Scouts Canada's *Fieldbook for Canadian Scouting* provides an excellent tree key on pages 371 – 374.

## What Bark Can Tell You

Tree bark is another way to identify a tree. Distinguishing differences can be found in colour, texture, hardness and bark patterns. The bark of most trees changes colour and thickness as the tree ages.

Examples:

White birch – creamy white bark that peels easily into large sheets, revealing pinkish-orange inner bark underneath.

American elms – dark, grayish-brown bark that forms long, deep, interesting ridges as it gets older

Trembling aspen – smooth, waxy looking bark that varies from pale green to almost white

Beech – smooth, gray bark with little markings (think of an elephant's leg)

Green ash – grayish-brown bark, broken into firm, narrow, slightly raised ridges that form a diamond shaped pattern

Evergreen – bark is full of resin which sticks to hands and clothing

Young jack pine – thin, reddish-brown to gray bark

Mature jack pine – bark becomes dark brown and flaky.

This is not a complete list of all the trees across Canada, but it shows how careful study of bark can identify a tree. When first starting to learn

trees by their bark, consider going into the forest when the leaves are on the trees so that you can positively identify the tree. Make a tree ID kit. (See sidebar.)

## Shape Up

The general shape or silhouette of a tree helps to differentiate between tree species. The best time to see the shape of a tree is during the winter, when the leaves don't hide the branch structure. Individual trees growing in an open space, best illustrate a tree's silhouette. Trees growing close together tend to lose their lower branches due to crowding or lack of sunlight and it's harder to see the tree's shape.

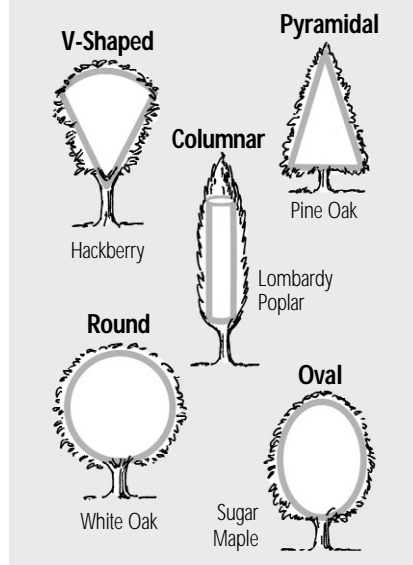
Shape is determined by many factors, including branch patterns, genetics, growth and site condition. Basically, there are five general shapes: columnar, oval, round, pyramid and v-shaped. (See sidebar.)

## SCOUTREES TIPS

With the support and participation of groups and sections, Scoutrees becomes a success – trees are planted and funds raised for local use, Council programs and the Canadian Brotherhood Fund. The team's plan must include a multiple approach to provide information on the project to sponsors, Scouters, youth and the community – encouraging their support and participation. The Scoutrees Council Kit, available from your council or off the Scoutrees web page, provides everything you need to know.

Look to specific sections of your daily paper for placing stories. The youth editor might be interested in a story on youth planting trees; the environment editor that Scoutrees reduce greenhouse gases and the world editor that funds raised through Scoutrees help people in third world countries. By keeping your community informed of the benefit of Scoutrees, their participation in this worthwhile cause will be increased.

## Tree Shapes



## Tree I.D. Kit

Make a bark rubbing of a tree using paper and crayon. Collect a leaf and part of a twig, and mount them with the bark rubbing on recipe cards. Label each card as to which type of tree it is, any observations of height or tree shape, and waterproof using a clear sealer such as Mac-Tac. Punch a hole in one corner and thread onto a key chain ring. Eventually you will have a Tree I.D. kit to take with you when you go into the forest.

Whole chapters in tree books are devoted to this subject, so once again observation is the best practice.

Some general examples are:

- ❖ Pine trees have branches at right angles to their trunks. Their overall shape is oval. Prevailing winds can bend the tree, giving it a sculpted look (think of the Group of Seven Pine Tree painting).
- ❖ Poplars have a straight, slender trunk with an oval shaped crown of slender branches.
- ❖ White birch may have a single or multiple trunk and an oval shaped crown.
- ❖ Maples have sturdy trunks with an oval crown of branches.
- ❖ Cedar trees grow in a pyramid shape, fatter at the bottom and tapering to the top.
- ❖ White oak can grow 80 feet high and have strong trunks with a rounded crown of branches.
- ❖ Willows are easily recognized with their rounded crown and sweeping long branches to the ground.
- ❖ White spruce have a columnar shape, with cones hanging down from their branches.

### Provincial Trees

A long time ago, Canadian provinces and territories chose specific tree species to represent the beauty, strength and majesty of Canada's forests. Canada is blessed with a variety of trees and shrubs suited to our environment. Long used to symbolize Canada, the Canadian Maple was officially designated on April 25, 1996 as Canada's tree.

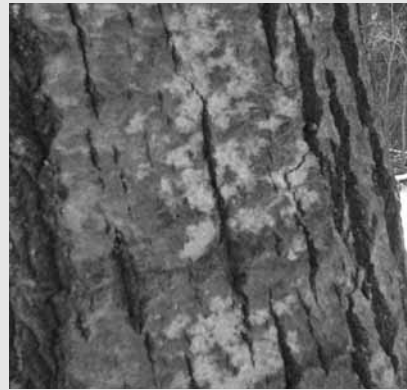
Yukon	Subalpine Fir
British Columbia	Western Red Cedar
Alberta	Lodgepole Pine
Saskatchewan	White Birch
Manitoba	White Spruce
Ontario	Eastern White Pine
Quebec	Yellow Birch
New Brunswick	Balsam Fir
Nova Scotia	Red Spruce
Prince Edward Island	Northern Red Oak
Newfoundland & Labrador	Black Spruce
Northwest Territories	Tamarack
Nunavut	Above the tree line

## Bark up the Right Tree with this Simple Guide



### Beech

Beech trees are easy to identify with their smooth grey bark, much like an elephant's leg. They also are one of the few trees to keep their dead leaves on the branches, late into the winter.



### Poplar

When young, poplar trees have white bark but as they grow older, their bark fades in colour and develops black splotches.



### Birch

Most people recognize white birch with its white bark and orange colour underneath. Young birch start off with red bark and white spots/dashes that turns to white as they get older.



### Black Walnut

Deeply furrowed diamond shaped fissures are found in the black bark of black walnut trees.



### Cedar

Cedar bark peels off in thin strips and has a distinctive smell.



### Sugar Maple

Sugar maple trees have a grayish bark with fissures that run up and down the trunk.

## TREE GAMES FOR ALL AGES

Adapt the following games to suit the age of your group.

### Plant Race

Compile a list of trees, shrubs and plants around your meeting place or camp. Send the youth, either alone or in pairs, off to collect specimens of the vegetation. The list can ask for specific items, (an acorn, a maple leaf, a wild rose petal, a lilac flower, a pine cone) or it could just be a check list to complete. This game will test the youths' memory as to where they noticed the plant/tree/shrub growing, as well as reinforce the identification of such. After everyone has completed their list in the allotted time, visit each plant to ensure that they identified it correctly.

### Walk the Plank

Use three boards laying them out in a zig-zag pattern with a bucket of rags at the end. The object is to walk the planks, pick up a rag out of the bucket and return to the start, all while blindfolded. Each time a youth steps off the board, they have to start over again. For older youth, consider using logs (with adult spotters on each side) and time them. For younger children, lay the planks in a straighter pattern and don't blindfold them.

### Blind Discovery Trail

A Blind Discovery Trail is a blindfolded, rope-guided travel through lands filled with mysterious smells, sounds, textures and obstacles. To make your Blind Discovery Trail exciting, find an area that offers a variety of experiences. A really good trail takes time to set up, but the experience will be worth it. Before laying out the trail, decide which side of the

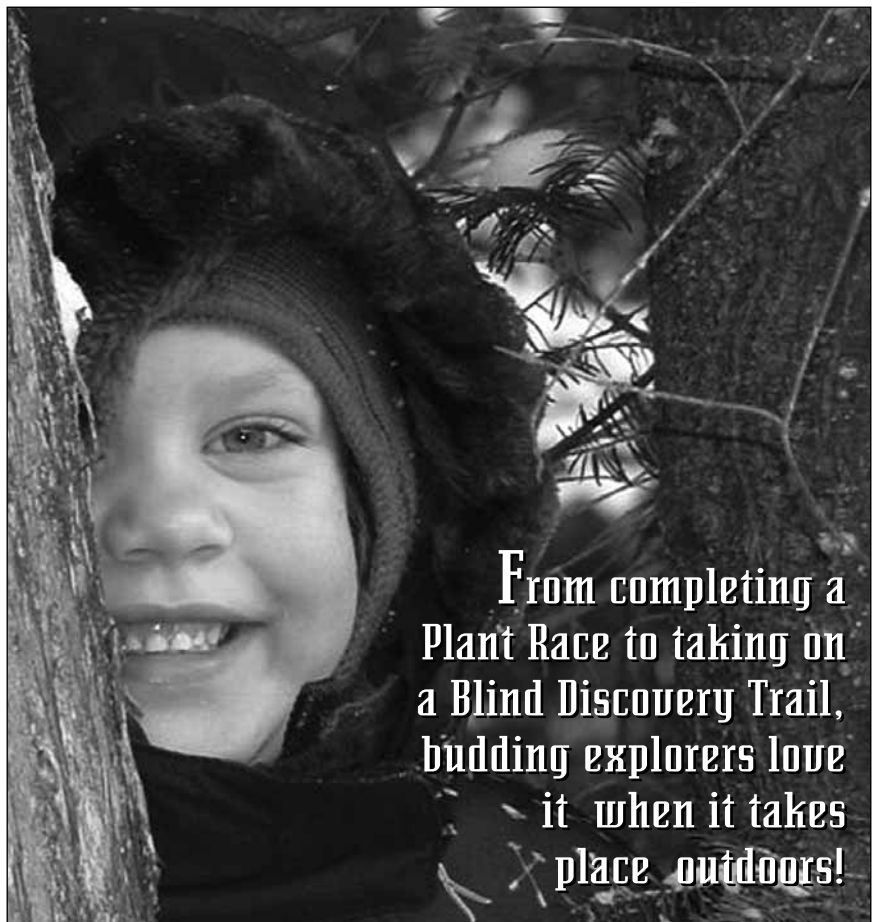


Photo: Maria Vicente-Mazzoli

From completing a Plant Race to taking on a Blind Discovery Trail, budding explorers love it when it takes place outdoors!

rope the youth will walk on. (Don't forget to tell them to always stay on that side.) Tie a knot in the rope to indicate something of interest that they will need to explore. Keep safety in mind and make sure there aren't any poisonous plants or animals in the area.

Variety can be found in the different natural elements: soft dirt, tender leaves, fragrant flowers, rough rocks. Tie the rope so that sometimes they have to crawl under a branch, over a mossy log, reach up for a tree branch. Take them from a sunny field to a shady spot.

For older youth, you can station leaders along the trail with cautions,

"Big step now, there's a big hole there." "Lean far to the right to avoid that prickly bush." "Duck down low under that tree branch." Strings leading away from the main rope can allow younger children to put their hand in a woodpecker's hole in a tree or a gopher hole.

Encourage no talking, and a slow pace. You'll find that after they've completed the trail, they can't wait to remove their blindfolds and do it all over again! X

— Susan Muehlherr, Editor of the Leader Magazine, is slowly learning to identify trees without their leaves. Her goal is to one day be as good as her father.



Join us Saturday, May 12th for the 10th Annual

## Jamboree on the Trail (JOTT) 2007

Members of the World Scout Movement hiking together toward a better future through Scouting.

For details check <http://jott.org> or contact Dave Wiebe at [hikechief@jott.org](mailto:hikechief@jott.org) or phone (905) 353-0800

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*Leave only footprints,  
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