



CAMP FIRE YARN NO. 16

PLANTS

Trees and Their Leaves . Eatable Plants Plant Observation

A backwoodsman who lives far away from human habitations in the deep forests must know about useful trees and other plants.

A Scout often has to describe the country he has been through. If he reports that it is “well wooded,” it might be of great importance for the reader of his report to know what kind of trees the woods were composed of.

For instance, if the wood were of fir or larch trees it would mean you could get poles for building bridges. If it were cocoa palm trees, you know you could get nuts for eating and “milk” for drinking. Willow trees mean water close by. Pine or sugar bush or gum trees would mean lots of good fuel.

A Scout should therefore make a point of learning the names and appearances of trees in his country.

He should get hold of a leaf of each kind and compare it with the leaf on the tree, and then get to know the general shape and appearance of each kind of tree, so he can recognize it at a distance—not only in summer, but also in winter. Some trees have typical shapes—as the Oak, Elm and Poplar in the sketches. See if you can find others, say of Pine, Birch, Willow, and so on.

Guardian of the Woods

As a Scout, you are the guardian of the woods. A Scout never damages a tree by hacking it with his knife or axe. It does not take long to fell a tree, but it takes many years to grow one, so a Scout cuts down a tree for a good reason only—not just for the sake of using his axe. For every tree felled, two should be planted.



Learn to sketch the leaves and outline of trees, such as this oak.

Firewood

It is seldom necessary to chop trees even for firewood, as usually there is plenty of dead wood lying about on the ground. Or a dead branch can be broken off a tree. Dead wood burns far more easily than green wood.

Generally speaking, *soft woods*—pine, fir, spruce and larch—make good kindling and give quick fires for short jobs such as boiling water. *Hard woods*—oak, beech, maples and others—give lasting fires with many embers for longer jobs such as roasting, stewing and baking.

In America they say, “One tree may make a million matches—one match may destroy a million trees.” A Scout is very careful about fires. When he uses one he sees that it is completely out before he leaves the place, by dousing the last spark with water.

Other Plants

You ought to know what plants are useful to you in providing you with food.

Supposing you were out in a jungle without any food and knew nothing about plants—you might die of starvation or of poisoning, from not knowing which fruits or roots were wholesome and which dangerous to eat.



European elm has a distinctive form. So has Lombardy poplar.

Eatable Plants

There are numbers of berries, nuts, roots, barks, and leaves that make good eating. Find out which of these are found near your camp site, and try to make a camp meal of them.

Crops of different kinds of corn and seed, vegetable roots, and many grasses are also edible. Certain kinds of moss are used for food. Some types of seaweed can also be eaten.

You will want to be able to recognize the common flowers of the field and wood. Some of these are related to our garden flowers, and have some of the same beauty. Others are herbs which are useful for flavouring in cooking and for medicine.

PATROL PRACTICES IN PLANT OBSERVATION

Take out the Scouts to get specimens of leaves, fruits, or blossoms of various trees and shrubs, and observe the shape and nature of trees both in summer and in winter.

Collect leaves of different trees. Let Scouts make tracings of them and write the name of the tree on each.

In the country have Scouts examine crops in all stages of their growth, so that they know pretty well by sight what kind of crop is coming up.

Find all the local wild plants that may be used for food.

Make a collection of leaf impressions: Get some carbon copying paper. Lay the leaf vein side downwards on the carbon, place a piece of thin paper on top and rub the whole firmly. Remove the paper and pick up the leaf. Now lay it, again vein side downwards, on the paper you are using for the impressions; again place a piece of paper on top and rub firmly. This should give a very clear impression of the leaf.

Encourage Scouts to collect specimens of wild flowers and press them between sheets of blotting paper in a heavy book.

GAMES IN PLANT OBSERVATION

What Is It?

Two Scouts start out and make a trail with trail marks. They have decided upon an uncommon sign to signify "What is **it**?" such as a circle with a line drawn through **it**, and a number next to **it**.

The remainder of the Patrol or Troop start out, say, ten minutes after the first two, either as a body or separately, and take notebooks and pencils with them.

The game consists of entering in their notebooks the "What is it?" signs that have been noticed and write down the nature of the article closest to the sign, such as "Oak", "Dandelion", etc.

Marks should be given according to the number of signs observed and for the correct answers to the "What is it?"s.

Besides being very interesting, this game develops observation, strengthens the memory and is a good botany instruction.

Plant Race

The Patrol Leader starts off his Scouts, either cycling or on foot, to go in any direction they like, to get a specimen of any ordered plant. This may be a maple seed pod, an acorn, a thistle, ragweed, a milkweed pod, a choke cherry twig, or something similar that will tax their knowledge of plants, test their memory as to where they noticed one of the kind required, and make them quick in getting there and back.