



BUREAU OF FORESTRY

WINTER TREE IDENTIFICATION TIPS

Or: You Don't Need Leaves To Identify Trees

TWIG TIPS:

- If twigs are lustrous olive-green or yellowish green, sometimes tinged with brown and have a "fruity" smell..... **Sassafras**
- If twigs are dull-light yellowish brown and smell and taste of wintergreen **Yellow Birch**
If the twigs are lustrous and reddish brown but still taste of wintergreen **Black or Sweet Birch**
- If twigs are reddish-brown with a grayish film and have an odor of bitter almonds **Black Cherry**
- If buds are swelled and look like an onion **Flowering Dogwood**
- If buds are long, narrow and sharply pointed (like a cigar or little orange carrots) **Beech**
- If the buds are large and resemble a "duck's bill" **Tulip Poplar**
- If the terminal or end buds are sulfur yellow and look like two tightly wrapped leaves
Bitternut Hickory
- Thick, stout twigs (often the size of a pencil) that are paired oppositely on a branch **White Ash**
- Thinner, shorter, smaller but more numerous twigs that are paired oppositely on a branch **Maple**
Slender, glossy, smooth, red **Red Maple**
Reddish-brown to light brown with sharp pointed, brown buds **Sugar Maple**
- Small twigs and branches occur at right angles to the trunk and horizontal branching like 'spokes of a wheel' **Blackgum**

HARDWOOD TIPS

- Most hardwoods trees have alternate branching. That is a branch grows on alternating sides like your right arm and left leg.
- A few hardwoods trees have opposite branching however. That is when two branches grow directly across from each other like your two arms or your two legs. To remember these few trees think:
MAD
 - Maples
 - Ashes
 - Dogwoods

BARK TIPS:

- Smooth gray bark that resembles an elephants skin **Beech**
- Scaly bark that resembles burnt cornflakes or potato chips **Black Cherry**
- Smooth gray bark on a shrub with wavering ridges like a muscle
American Hornbeam / Blue Beech / Musclewood
- Gray or grayish-brown, vertically ridged bark with diamond or alphabet shapes I, A, V, X, N, etc. It is often called the "alphabet tree" since 'a' corresponds to **White Ash**
- Bark that separates from the tree at the top and bottom of the strip **Red Maple**
Bark with vertical strips that are attached on one side **Sugar Maple**
- Bark that peels horizontally in fine layers and may have a shiny golden appearance **Yellow Birch**
- Smooth, dark brown with many furrowed irregular blocks with an inner orange bark **Black Oak**
- Pale ashy-gray, scaly or flaky not very fissured bark **White Oak**
- Smooth, dark bark that is shallowly fissured with broad, flat, grayish ridges on the upper portion
Red Oak
- Older bark breaks up into long, loosely attached plates **Shagbark Hickory**
- Deep, irregular fissures with flat-topped ridges in bark with a salmon color **Sassafras**

EVERGREEN TIPS

- Each square or rounded needle is attached singly to the stem and needles are all around the stem
Spruce
 - Droopy branches and secondary branches are only the bottom drooping or hanging down
Norway Spruce
 - Bluish-green needles that are often glaucous have a pungent or disagreeable odor when crushed, also called Cat Spruce **White Spruce**
 - Stiff, in-curved and spiny pointed needles that are usually bluish-green in color
Blue Spruce
- Two to five needles in a bunch or bundle
 - Five soft needles per bundle (five letters in 'white' five needles per bundle) **White Pine**
 - Three needles per bundle (three 'pitches' and you're out) **Pitch Pine**
 - Two long needles in a bunch approximately 4-6" in length **Red Pine**
 - Two shorter needles (1-3") that are twisted together and rigid **Scots Pine**
 - Two shorter needles (1-2") that are widely spread apart in a "V" shape **Jack Pine**
- Needles are flat and attached with a small petiole (stem) to the branch. Two white lines on underside of needle **Eastern Hemlock**
- Ten to twenty needles per bunch that turn brown and drop in the fall **Larch**