

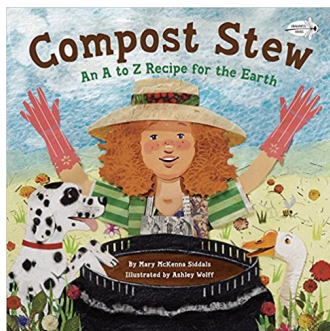
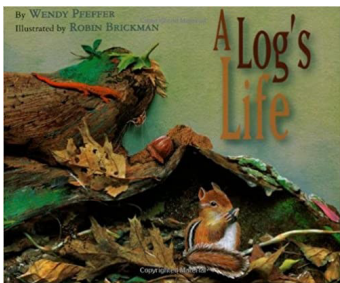
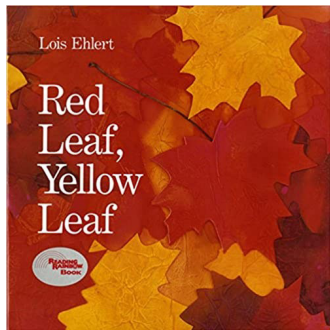
Roots



Digging Deeper into Soil & Water Resources

LOOKING AT LEAVES

LITERACY CONNECTIONS



Fall is a favorite season of some with the colorful leaves and cooler temperatures. Others are not as happy to see this change. Many connect the falling leaves with work as they rake and bag the leaves to take them to the curb. Maybe those that enjoy this season know a secret—it is best to leave the leaves on the ground!



Fall leaves are beneficial to the environment in a variety of ways:

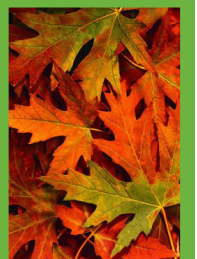
- **Providing habitat for wildlife:** Fallen leaves provide great cover and places to hibernate or overwinter for animals like frogs, turtles, and salamanders. Even moth and butterfly caterpillars use fallen leaves for shelter before emerging in spring.
- **Providing food for wildlife:** Creatures like earthworms and millipedes live in and break down leaf litter. These soil critters and others are also a source of food for larger animals like birds and toads.
- **Adding nutrients to your soil:** As leaves break down and decompose, nutrients are added to soil which provides a healthier environment for plants to grow.
- **Improving the habitat of your lawn:** Fallen leaves provide insulation for plants over the winter and allow for greater water retention into the soil.

Best practices include:

- Mowing/mulching the leaves into quarter sized pieces to facilitate decomposition.
- Raking leaves around bases of trees and over gardens to provide cover (raking them into piles to jump in first, is totally acceptable).
- Keep leaves off the street and out of storm drains to protect our waterways.
- Create leaf art
- Enjoy the beautiful colors!!

Did You Know?

The colors in fall leaves represent the pigments that are left over in the leaves when they stopped making food for the summer. The green chlorophyll is absorbed back into the tree for use next spring. Red leaves contain a pigment that is thought to protect the leaf from sunburn. Yellow and orange leaves have carotene (like carrots) and brown leaves have no pigment left at all!



LOOKING AT LEAVES

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT LEAVES

It's time to go outside, explore and get those creative juices flowing!

Supplies:

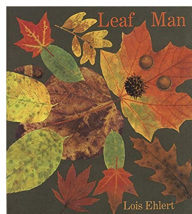
- Fallen leaves
- Blank paper
- Crayons
- [How to Video](#)



Procedures:

1. Go outside in your yard or a nearby park and collect a variety of fallen leaves. Be careful to avoid **poison ivy—[Leaves of Three, Let it Be!](#)**
2. Find a large, flat surface where you can spread out the leaves you collected.
3. Decide what shape you want to create with the leaves—a favorite animal for example.
4. Place the leaves on the flat surface overlapping them as needed to create the shape you want to make. Place the more rough sides of the leaves facing up.
5. Cover the leaves with the blank piece of paper.
6. Take a crayon and using the long side of the crayon, rub back and forth over the leaves. Color until you are able to see the shape you created.
7. See if a family member can guess what you created!

For inspiration and ideas listen to the story: [Leaf Man](#)



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



[Read Aloud: I Am A Leaf](#)

[SciShow Kids: Why Do Leaves Change Colors in the Fall?](#)

[Project Learning Tree: Name That Tree](#)

[Ranger Rick Leaves Resources](#)

[Project Learning Tree: Leaf Activities for Young Learners](#)

[California Academy of Sciences: What Color is Your Leaf?](#)

GIVE IT A TRY!!

Leaf shape is the easiest way to identify trees. Some leaves are long and skinny, some more broad like your hand and others have separate pieces called leaflets!

Try to identify the trees in your yard or neighborhood using an [identification chart](#).

EXTEND LEARNING:

1. Fallen leaves are often called "leaf litter." What similarities do they have to the litter we find along the street?
2. What can we do to keep the leaves out of the streets and storm drains in order to protect water quality?



Create an educational poster for your neighborhood to spread the word about the importance of leaving your leaves on your lawn and keeping them out of storm drains.

Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are equal opportunity providers and employers.

Looking at Leaves

Can you ID which trees these leaves are from?



Name: _____

Color the leaves in your favorite fall colors!

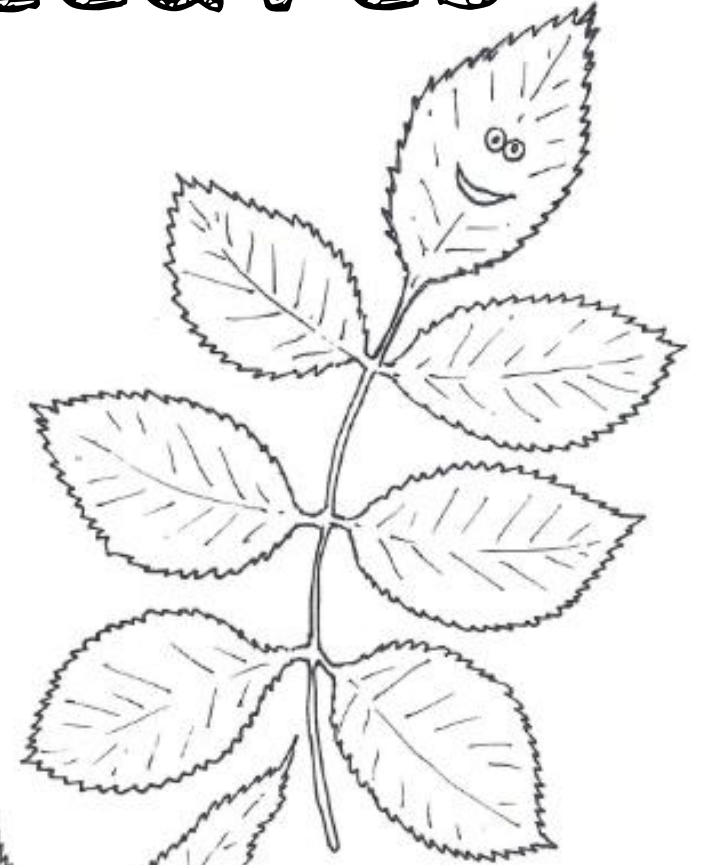


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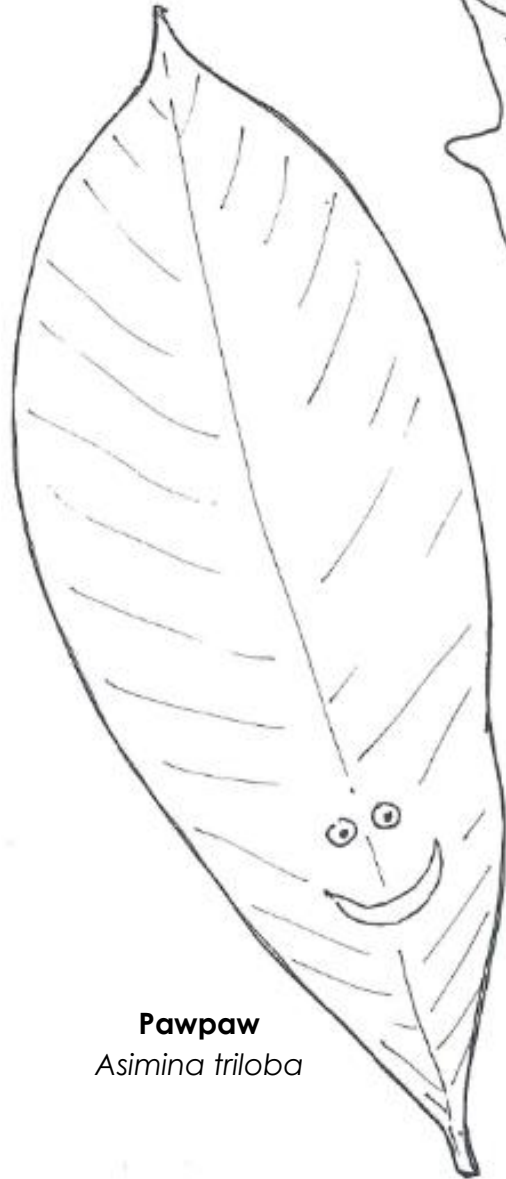
Looking at Leaves

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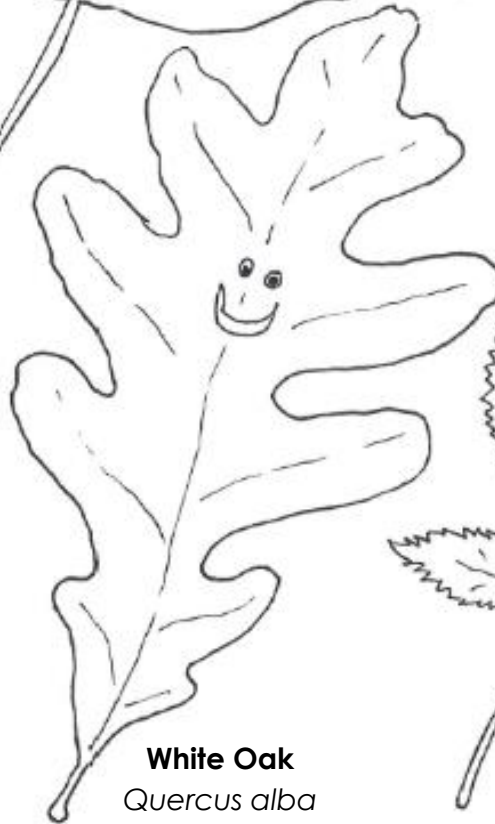
Yellow Poplar
Liriodendron tulipifera



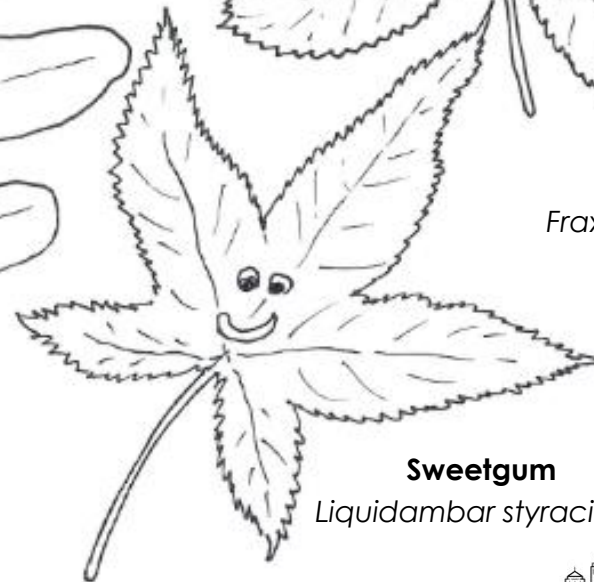
Blue Ash
Fraxinus quadrangulata



Pawpaw
Asimina triloba



White Oak
Quercus alba



Sweetgum
Liquidambar styraciflua

Name: _____

Color the leaves in your favorite fall colors!



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