



DALLAS ARBORETUM
Education

Garden STEM at Home
Looking at Leaves



WE GROW MINDS, TOO.



OBJECTIVE:

STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND HOW LEAF SHAPE, SIZE AND OTHER CHARACTERISTICS VARY FROM SPECIES TO SPECIES.

SOURCE

Project Learning Tree PreK-8 Activity Guide

BACKGROUND

There are two kinds of trees in the world: those with needles (conifers) and those with broad leaves. Evergreens maintain their leaves year-round, while deciduous lose all of their leaves each year. There are, of course, exceptions to these rules, including larches and yews.

The shape and size of leaves varies greatly, and provide clues to a given tree's identity. Leaf shape, margin, texture and arrangement are all characteristics that differentiate. Non-leaf identification clues include bark, fruit and flowers.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take kids to an area where they can collect 3-5 different fallen leaves.
2. Working as a family or in small teams, have students share ways that leaves can be sorted, including size, teeth, hairs, texture, veins or evidence of insects.
3. Once all learnings have been shared, trade leaves and return to the original collection spot. Ask students to collect more information about the leaf including the tree it fell from, the tree's bark, branch pattern, evidence of fruits/nuts on the tree, etc.
4. Use all of this information, and field guides, to identify the trees. The Texas Connections resource guide below includes many common species found in North Texas.
5. Stumped? Upload an image to iNaturalist for expert identification.
6. Optional: Use your collected leaves for nature art, such as crayon rubbings, splatter painting around the leaf or T-shirt prints.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Download the Looking at Leaves Texas Connections Resource Guide from PLT:
http://www.plttexas.org/uploadedFiles/Websites/PLT_Texas/Content/Texas_Connection/Activity%2064%20Looking%20at%20Leaves.pdf

Explore the Looking at Leaves Additional Resources Guide from PLT:
<https://www.plt.org/activity-resources/prek-8-activity-64-looking-at-leaves/>

Texas A&M Forest Service Trees of Texas ID guide:
<http://texastreeid.tamu.edu/>

Arbor Day Foundation Tree Field Guide:
<https://www.arborday.org/trees/whattree/>