

Evergreens Everywhere

All Ages

When it comes to trees, the evergreens are hardworking superheroes. Year round they clean the air, exhaling oxygen and releasing a pleasant smell. In winter, when other trees are bare, the evergreens are still offering food, shelter from the elements and protection from predators to many creatures. Winter is a great time to learn about evergreen trees and how to identify them, but you can study them anytime. Trees are put into two groups, the broad-leafed, deciduous trees which lose their leaves, and coniferous trees. Coniferous trees have cones and needle-like leaves that can survive extreme temperature and moisture changes, heavy snow loads, and high winds. All evergreens are conifers, but not all conifers are green year-round. Larches and Tamaracks have cones but lose their needles in the fall.

At first glance, all evergreens may look alike. A closer look will reveal each type of evergreen is very different. You can learn to identify them by their shape and by their needles. Use the next page to get started. Go on a hike and try to collect as many different varieties as you can. Make rubbings of the needles and bark (see **Wax Rubbings** under Creative Ponderings), Sketch or take a photo of the shape of the different types of trees. There is a worksheet below to help you keep track.

Points to ponder as you search for evergreens.

- Why are evergreens triangular in shape, wide at the bottom, while other trees are wider at the top? (because the heaviest snow loads are on the strongest branches)
- What things do we make from wood? (The list is long, don't forget paper products)
- Do we use the sap or pitch for anything? (glue, candles, turpentine, to clean a cut)
- Do they have blossoms, pollen? (Male cones on the lower branches make pollen, female cones on the upper branches make seeds. It can take 3 years for a seed to form)
- How does the pollen get to the female cones? (The wind carries the pollen up to the female cones. In the spring, try shaking out some pollen.)
- How do the seeds get out of the cone? (put a closed cone in a warm, dry place)
- Look for evidence of critters eating cones. (Juniper seeds sprout 3 times better when they have passed through a bird—been eaten and then pooped out)
- Can birds get the seeds from cones? (check out the crossbills)
- Practice identifying evergreens from a distance by shape.
- Give an evergreen a big thank you hug for all its hard work.

Try some Cedar Tea! Gather at least 1 cup of fresh white cedar* greens. Thoroughly wash them with cool water. Bring 3 cups of water to a boil then add the cedar. Remove from the heat, cover and steep for 20 minutes. Pour the tea through a strainer. Sweeten to taste. Enjoy a tasty cup of vitamin C rich tea!
* Be sure you can identify a plant properly before consuming it.



Find and Identify These Common Conifers



White Pine

Needles—Long, soft, flexible,
in a cluster of 5, blue-green
Cone—Long, loose cone
Bark—smooth on young growth
Ontario's Provincial tree.



Red Pine

Needles—Very long, stiff, brittle,
in a cluster of 2, dark green
Cone—sturdy, compact cone-shaped
Bark—reddish scales or flakes
Not edible. Best craft cones.



White Cedar

Needles—small flat scales,
yellow-green to dark green
Cone—tiny, loose cone
Bark—reddish, shredded looking
Edible, good roots for weaving

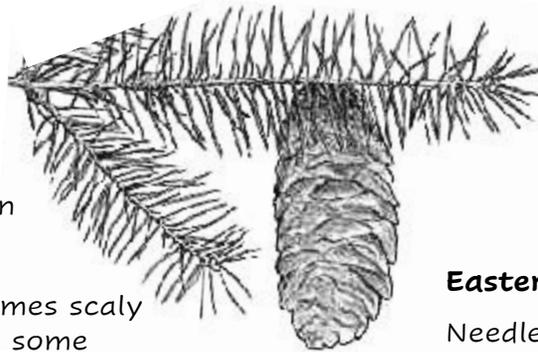


Eastern Red Cedar (Juniper)

Needles—small, spike-like scales,
dark green
Cone—tiny, blue, berry-like
Bark—grey, shredded looking
Edible, berries used in gin

White Spruce

Needles—short, stiff green
to blue-green
Cone—small, long oval
Bark—smooth, grey, becomes scaly
Edible, very strong scent, some
times called Skunk Spruce



Eastern Hemlock

Needles—small, flat, soft, shiny
dark green, white below
Cone—small, rounded oval
Bark—purple grey, scaly
Edible, lives up 600 years



Tamarack

Needles—short, soft, clumps of
up to 40, look like tufts
Cone—small, oval, curved stem
Bark—smooth, reddish brown
Drops needles in the fall, twigs are
very bumpy looking in winter



Eastern Red Cedar



White Spruce



Tamarack



Red Pine



White Cedar



Eastern Hemlock



Eastern White Pine

(name of tree)

The needles or scales look like this

(draw or make a rubbing)

The bark look like this

(draw or make a rubbing)

The cones look like this

The whole tree look like this (overall shape)

This tree smells _____

This tree is the home of _____

My favorite thing about this tree is _____

An interesting fact about this tree is _____

If this tree could talk it would tell me