

VCE Newport News Master Gardeners
Grin and Grow Learning Garden
Activity 5

Science in the garden!

Have you ever noticed that all trees are not alike? Trees have different shapes, bark, leaves and flowers. See if you can find these trees in the Learning Garden by identifying their characteristics.

Weeping Yaupon Holly - This small tree is identified by its branches that grow in an arching downward direction. It is an evergreen tree, which means that it does not drop its leaves in the fall. It produces red berries on the female plants that are loved by birds and because it is an evergreen, it provides shelter for birds year round. Its flowers are attractive to native bees. (found in the smiling face part of our garden)

Crape Myrtle - The crape myrtle is a small to medium deciduous (drops its leaves in the fall) tree that produces bright clusters of flowers in mid to late summer. It is known for its bark that exfoliates, revealing a smooth, vari-colored under bark from gray to brown. This tree adds interest to the winter garden. As a non-native tree, it supports little wild life. (found in the smiling face part of our garden)

Bald Cypress - The bald cypress is a tree with needles that drops these leaves in the fall - a deciduous conifer. It produces small cones about 1 inch in length that contain triangular seeds. These trees grow well in wet areas and will produce "cypress knees" in very wet conditions. This native tree supports 17 species of butterflies and moths. (found in our native tree grove)

River Birch - The river birch, a multi-branched tree, is a moderate grower and likes wet conditions. It is loved for its peeling bark, adding winter interest to the landscape. This native tree supports 321 species of butterflies and moths. (found in our native tree grove)

Red Maple - The red maple is one of the first trees to change color in the fall and ours turns a bright red. It produces two-winged fruit and the leaves have ribs that radiate from one point. This native tree supports 274 species of butterflies and moths. (found in our native tree grove)

Ninebark - The nine bark is a very small native tree with thick burgundy-plum foliage. It is covered with soft pink clusters of flowers in the spring that are attractive to native bees. This is a deciduous tree with rough bark that adds interest to the winter garden. (found in the smiling face part of our garden)

Follow-up Activity

Take a walk around your neighborhood or street with a responsible adult and study the trees you see. If you have a notebook, make some drawings of the leaf, bark, and shape of a tree you would like to learn more about. Notice and record other observations such as leaf color, size and the look of the leaf edges. You might even make a rubbing of a leaf.

Then, when you have made all the observations you can, look in a book or online for a tree that fits your descriptions.

A great on line source for tree identification is

<http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/ident.htm>



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