

# Junior Arborists Field Guide

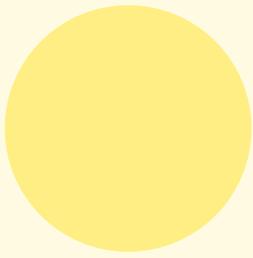


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Let's explore and learn about trees with  
The Nature Conservancy.





Trees are crucial to human existence. They offer habitats for a wide range of mammals, birds and insects and also provide wood for us to build all sorts of things. The peaches you love, many of your favorite nuts and even the maple syrup for your pancakes all come from trees.

Trees also keep our air clean and, believe it or not, they make it possible for us to breathe. We breathe in oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide—the exact opposite of trees—making them excellent friends to have, indeed.



*Your kiddos can learn the importance of trees by exploring those local to you. Here are some fun and engaging living tree activities designed for kids ages 2–5 that lend themselves to spending time outside.*



## Activity 1

# Plant a tree.

Get ready to plant a sapling with your sapling.

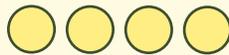
LENGTH OF ACTIVITY



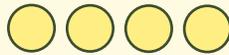
45 mins.–  
1 hour

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

Required by adult:



Level of prep required:



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

**One gallon pot holding a small native tree**  
(ex. sugar maple, white cedar, paper birch  
or tamarack; about \$10 from a nursery)

**Adult- and kid-sized shovels  
and gardening gloves**

**Large watering can**

## WHAT YOUR CHILD IS LEARNING:

- How to care for a living thing
- Introduction to the plant life cycle and growth process
  - Fine motor skills as they manipulate the materials
- Vocabulary words related to trees, plants and nature



Activity steps on next page.



# What you do:

1



## PICK YOUR SPOT!

Even if you're planting in your own yard, it's important to make sure you are planting a tree that will fit in the allotted space and thrive in those conditions.

2



## PICK YOUR TREE.

Ask your local nursery what tree is best for your family according to your climate. Here are some tips to help your sapling thrive:

### Water Needs:

If you live in a very rainy or dry climate, you'll want to pick a tree that matches the moisture availability of your local ecosystem.

### Sunlight Needs:

How much sun will your selected spot offer a baby tree? "Shade tolerance" is the term gardeners and foresters use to rank the light requirements of each species.

### Soil Needs:

The depth, composition, pH and water content of the soil can determine whether a tree survives. Each kind of tree has different soil needs—you may want to bring a soil sample to your local nursery to match the right tree to the dirt that will make up its new home.

3

Dig a hole 2 to 3 times the diameter of the pot and deep enough to hold the soil and roots.

4

Remove the tree from the pot and place it in the hole.

5

Cover the roots with loose soil.

6

Thoroughly soak the tree by emptying several large watering cans or using an irrigation soaker.

7

For the first few years, water it well once a week if the weather is dry.

8

Track your tree's growth with regular photos.





# Don't have access to a backyard or a community garden?

That's ok! Some trees will thrive when potted indoors. And bonus—they will help clean the air in your home!

## A FEW TIPS FOR GROWING HEALTHY INDOOR TREES:



- 1 Research to make sure that the tree you choose will grow indoors and isn't poisonous to children or pets (e.g. Ponytail Palm or Money Tree).
- 2 Choose a pot that is relative to the size of the tree.
- 3 Use a pot with drainage holes to prevent overwatering.
- 4 Repot the tree as it grows to accommodate root expansion.
- 5 Check your tree regularly for pests.
- 6 Don't move your plants too often; they acclimate to their surroundings.
- 7 When watering, avoid the foliage and aim for the soil.
- 8 Dust the foliage of your tree regularly with a damp cloth.
- 9 Give your plant new soil at least once a year.
- 10 Use room temperature water.

If planting isn't an option, you might also consider caring for your neighborhood trees! We encourage you to check with local officials to discover how you might be able to make a difference in your community.



## Activity 2

# Nature walk

Take a tree walk and identify the trees in your neighborhood. A purposeful tree-gazing walk helps children practice their observation skills and become curious about nature.

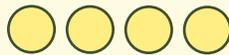
LENGTH OF ACTIVITY



30 mins.–  
1 hour

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

Required by adult:



Level of prep required:



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Your eyes!

**A tree identification guide**  
(we love *The Arbor Day Foundation's*  
version and it's even available as an app!)

Pencil or crayon

## WHAT YOUR CHILD IS LEARNING:

- Appreciation of nature and what types of trees are native to your community
  - How to observe and learn about nature
- Vocabulary words related to trees, plants and nature



Activity steps on next page.



# What you do:

Choose a nearby spot for your walk together (think: park, nature trail or even your own neighborhood).

? Questions to ask along your walk:

How many different types of trees do you see?

What colors are the trees?

How many parts of the tree can you name?

What does each type of tree feel like?

How do the trees smell?

What kinds of leaves do different trees have?

How many branches does it have?

Does it have leaves? If so, how many? What color are they?

Does it have buds?

Does it have fruit or seeds, like apples or acorns or pine cones?



# Observation log:

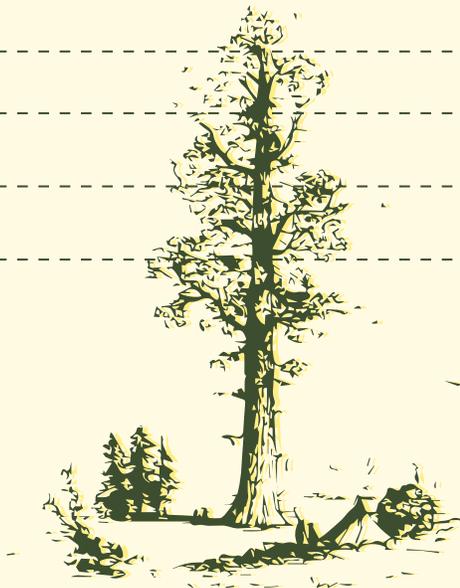
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Activity 2

Have an adult or a big kid adventure buddy help write down your observations in the log below:

A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing observations.





### Activity 3

# Leaf Painting

Paint a masterpiece with Mother Nature—  
no brush required!

LENGTH OF ACTIVITY



30 mins.-  
1 hour

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

Required by adult:



Level of prep required:



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Branches and/or twigs  
Pinecones  
Wheat stalks  
Leaves  
Flowers

Washable tempera paint in a  
variety of colors

White construction paper or  
heavy paper

## WHAT YOUR CHILD IS LEARNING:

- Fine motor skills as they manipulate the materials
- Creativity! How to create art out of nature
- Texture from the different items found and paint used to create



Activity steps on next page.



# What you do:



When you think of painting, you probably think about using a brush (or fingers perhaps). But nature can provide a new way to create a masterpiece. In this art project, twigs, bark, pine cones, or the floppy branch of a spruce tree become brushes; they create incredible textures on paper. This is a great art activity to set up outside, so that kids can paint as freely as they wish.



- 1 Take a walk, gather your supplies and see what nature inspires!
- 2 Collect the leaves, flowers, pinecones, bark and branches you discovered outside.
- 3 Squeeze out some tempera paint in a series of dishes.
- 4 Lay out your flowers and branches, etc.
- 5 Dip your materials in paint and dab or paint on the paper to create your masterpiece.
- 6 Have an adult snap a photo of your nature-inspired creation and post on social media using #growXtogether.

# Tree and Plant Life Cycle

## Vocabulary Words:



TREE

SOIL

ROOTS

WATER

SUN

SAPLING



These activities were created in partnership with  
KinderCare Education and The Nature Conservancy.



## MAKE A BIGGER IMPACT

The Nature Conservancy is a global environmental nonprofit which is taking on the planet's biggest, most important challenges by focusing on priorities that science shows are the most urgent and where their innovation and expertise can be game changers.

Head to [nature.org/naturelab](https://www.nature.org/naturelab) to find more nature learning resources and activities.

# Congratulations, you've completed the Junior Arborist Field Guide!



Print or trace and cut out The Nature Conservancy's  
Grow Together badge to honor your achievement.



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to collect all Grow Together merit badges!

