

Conifer Connections

A mini lesson for grades 3&6

The Coniferous Trees of Ontario identification wheel provided by [Forests Ontario](#)

Time required: 1 class period

Materials:

- The Coniferous Trees of Ontario Identification Wheel (printouts attached)
- Paper fasteners
- Paper or journal for recording
- Outdoor area with a variety of coniferous trees

Curriculum Connections:

Grade 3: Understanding Life Systems - Growth and Changes in Plants

1.1 assess ways in which plants are important to humans and other living things, taking different points of view into consideration

2.2 observe and compare the parts of a variety of plants

2.4 investigate ways in which a variety of plants adapt and/or react to their environment, including changes in their environment, using a variety of methods

3.6 describe ways in which plants and animals depend on each other

Grade 6: Understanding Life Systems - Biodiversity

2.2 investigate the organisms found in a specific habitat and classify them according to a classification system

2.3 use scientific inquiry/research skills to compare the characteristics of organisms within the plant or animal kingdoms

3.1 identify and describe the distinguishing characteristics of different groups of plants and animals and use these characteristics to further classify various kinds of plants and animals



Background:

Many animals have adapted to survive Canadian winters and, similarly, plants have their own seasonal adaptations. Annual plants die and start from seed the next year while perennials go dormant in the winter as way of surviving. Trees, specifically conifers, are unique and vital to the survival of many animals that are active in the winter. Many animals eat seeds from pine cones and since conifers keep their needles all year long, they provide shelter for a variety of wildlife. Being able to identify the conifers at your school or home is a great way to determine what wildlife may be living in your area!

Activity- Identifying Coniferous Trees:

Coniferous tree species, such as pines, spruces, and cedars, are characterized by their needle-like leaves and cones. Most conifers keep their foliage all year long. Ontario is lucky to be home to a large variety of tree species. The diversity of trees and other plants help support the diversity of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and fish that we have in Ontario.

1. Print one "Coniferous Trees of Ontario" identification wheel handout per student or small group. Following the instructions on the handout, students will cut out the wheel sections and attach with a paper fastener.
2. Take your students to an area with a variety of coniferous trees. You may wish to number off some trees ahead of time to compare identification between groups.
3. Using the identification wheel, have the students identify and record the coniferous trees in the area.
4. Return to the class and discuss:
 - Why are conifers important to Ontario's animals and plants?
 - Besides needles, what are other ways to identify trees? (Tree shape, bark, cones, buds, smell)
 - What animals might use conifers for food or shelter?
 - What can we do to protect trees and other plants?

Optional Extensions:

- Create a class tally and graph for the different conifer species in your school yard.
- Research: How do trees adapt to different seasons in Ontario? How do coniferous and deciduous trees differ in their adaptations?

Using the Identification Wheel:

1. Refer to instructions on the wheel printout. Note that there are two start locations on the wheel: trees with scales vs. trees with needles. The wheel only includes coniferous tree species that are native to Ontario.

Tree Wheel Activity Sheet

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Instructions for Making the Tree Wheel

1. Cut out Circle A and Circle B.
2. Place Circle A on top of Circle B and fasten the wheels together with a paper fastener through the centre.
3. Follow the instructions for using the wheel on the bottom of the next page.

Circle A



