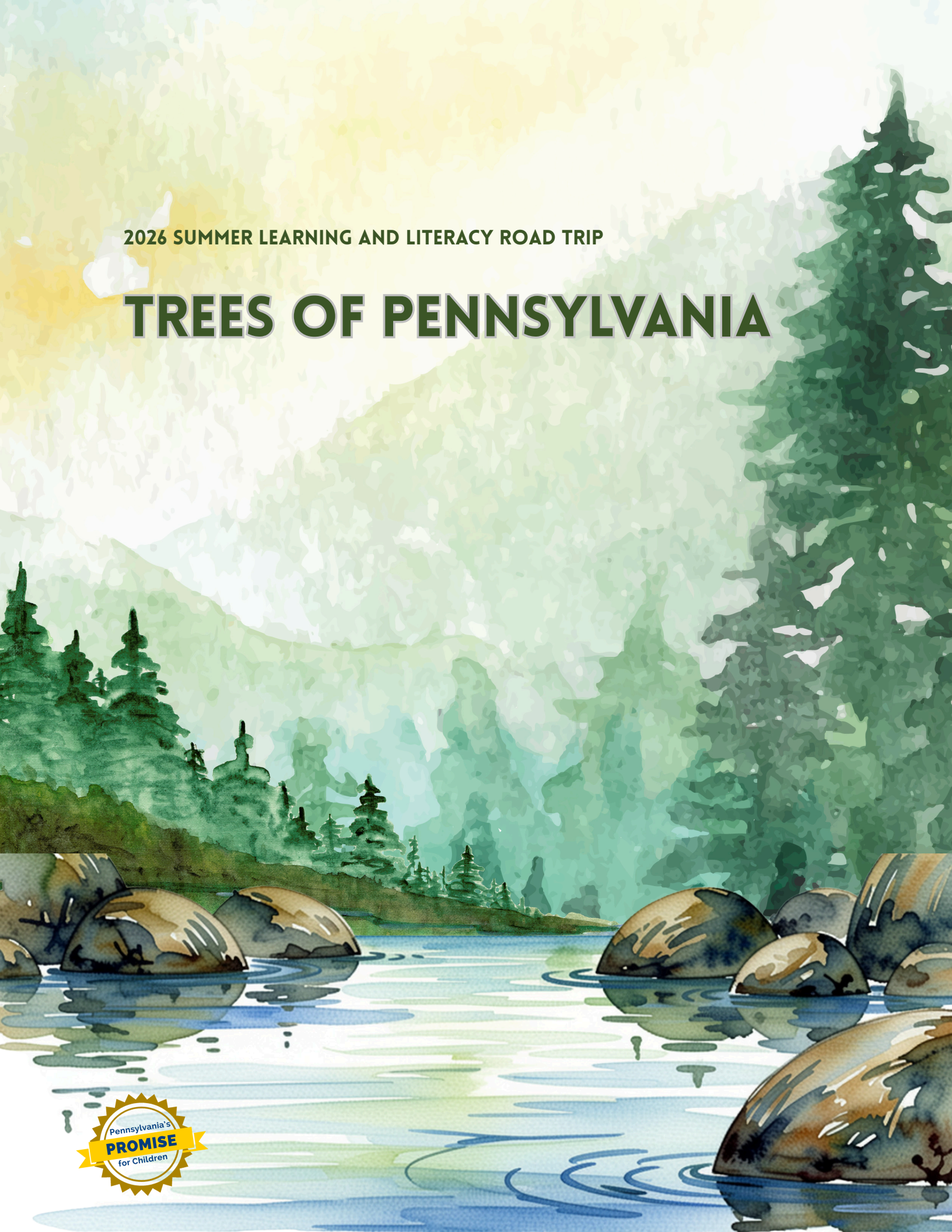


2026 SUMMER LEARNING AND LITERACY ROAD TRIP

# TREES OF PENNSYLVANIA



# TREES NATIVE TO PENNSYLVANIA

A native tree is a species that naturally grows in a specific region and has adapted over time to that area's climate, soil, and wildlife. These trees are important because they provide food and shelter for local animals, insects, and birds that depend on them.

Native trees also help keep ecosystems healthy by supporting biodiversity and maintaining balanced soil and water systems. By protecting native trees, we help preserve the natural environment and the life it supports.

Explore some of the types of native trees that can be commonly found throughout Pennsylvania!



**Eastern Hemlock:** The Eastern Hemlock is Pennsylvania's state tree! It has soft, flat needles and tiny cones.

**Where they're found in Pennsylvania:** The Eastern Hemlock is found in many parts of Pennsylvania, especially where it's cool and shady. Find them:

- In forests across the state
- Along streams, rivers, and valleys
- In the Appalachian Mountains
- In places like state parks and nature preserves

**Did you know...** Eastern Hemlock trees have soft, flat needles that don't poke, making them a comfy place for birds and animals to rest and hide.

*Photo courtesy of Kelsey O'Brien*

**Red Maple:** The Red Maple is one of the most common trees in Pennsylvania, and in the fall its leaves turn bright red, orange, and yellow, making forests look like they're on fire with color!

**Where they're found in Pennsylvania:** Red Maple trees are found all across Pennsylvania! You can see them:

- In forests and woodlands
- Near streams, ponds, and wetlands
- In parks, neighborhoods, and schoolyards
- From the mountains to the lowlands

**Did you know...** Oak trees make acorns that feed squirrels, deer, and birds, and they can live for hundreds of years, making them some of the strongest trees in the forest!



**Black Cherry:** Black cherry trees grow tall in Pennsylvania forests and make small cherries that birds and animals love to eat. In spring, they have pretty white flowers.

**Where they're found in Pennsylvania:**

Black cherry trees are found all across Pennsylvania. You can see them:

- In forests and woodlands
- On hillsides and mountains
- In parks and nature areas

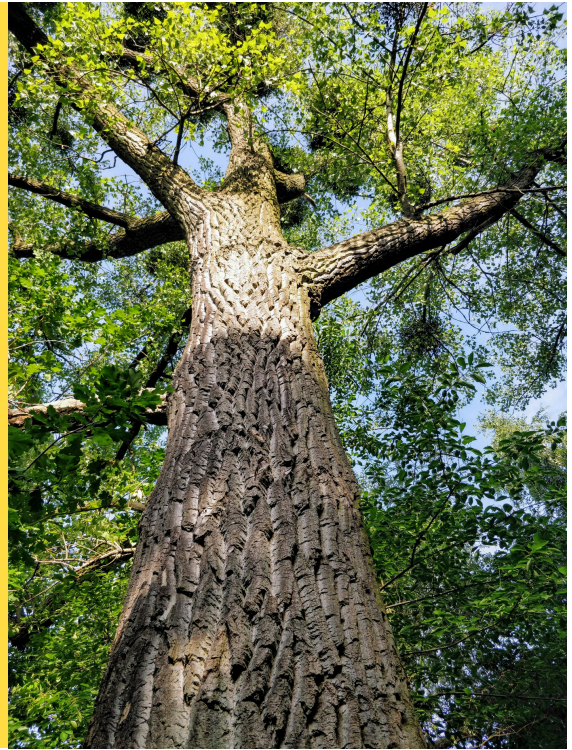
**Did you know...** The wild black cherry tree makes small, dark cherries that birds and animals love, and its sweet-smelling flowers help bees in the spring.

**Oaks:** Oak trees are strong and long-living trees that grow big and tall. They make acorns that feed squirrels and deer, and their wide leaves give great shade in the forest.

**Where they're found in Pennsylvania:** Oak trees, including Northern Red Oak, White Oak, and Chestnut Oak, are found all across Pennsylvania. You can see them:

- In forests and woodlands
- On hillsides and mountains
- In parks and nature areas

**Did you know...**some oak trees can live longer than 200 years!



**Yellow Poplar/Tulip Poplar:** Poplar trees grow tall and fast, with light green leaves that flutter in the wind, making them look like they're dancing.

**Where it's found in Pennsylvania:** Poplar trees are found all across Pennsylvania. You can see them:

- In forests and woodlands
- Along rivers and streams
- In fields, parks, and roadsides

**Did you know...**Poplar trees are important homes for birds and small animals, and their leaves and buds help deer, rabbits, and insects find food.

**White Ash:** White Ash trees grow tall and strong with long leaves, and their seeds help birds and animals find food. Their wood is very sturdy, making them an important tree in the forest.

**Where they're found in Pennsylvania:**

White Ash trees are found all across Pennsylvania. You can see them:

- In forests and woodlands
- Near rivers and streams
- In parks and neighborhoods

**Did you know...**White Ash trees make winged seeds that spin and float through the air like tiny helicopters, helping new trees grow!



Close up of Bark of the White Ash Tree  
*Photo courtesy of Kelsey O'Brien*



**Hickory:** Hickory trees are strong forest trees that make nuts for animals to eat. The Shagbark Hickory is easy to spot because its bark peels off in long, shaggy strips.

**Where they're found in Pennsylvania:** Hickory trees, including the Shagbark Hickory, are found in many parts of Pennsylvania. You can see them:

- In forests and woodlands
- On hillsides and mountains
- In parks and nature areas

**Did you know...**Hickory trees drop super-hard nuts, and squirrels work extra hard to crack them, like nature's tiny nut-crunching contest!

## TREE WATCH: SEASONS CHANGE!



Pick one tree to visit during the year.



Look closely and talk about what you see.

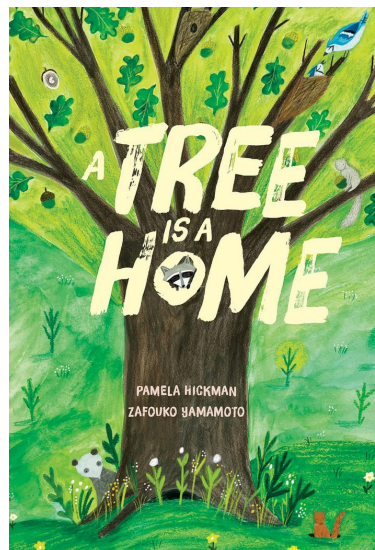
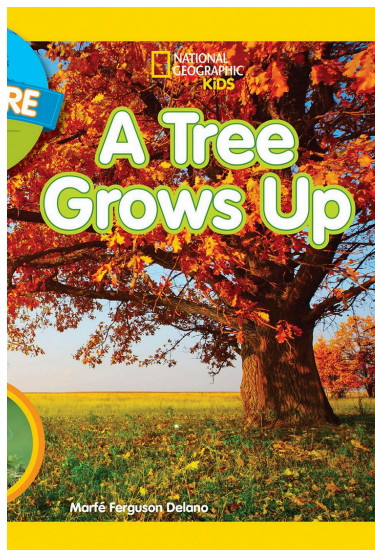
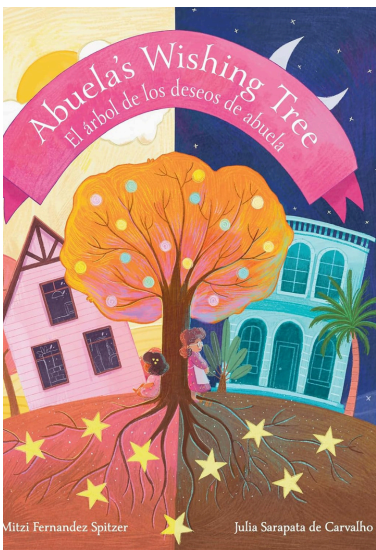
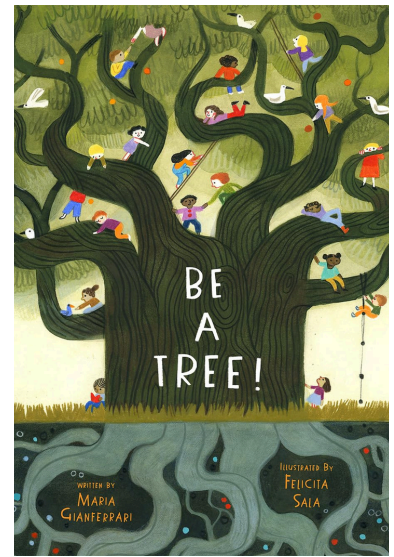
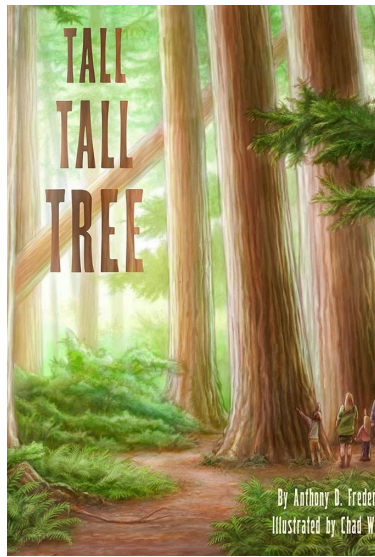
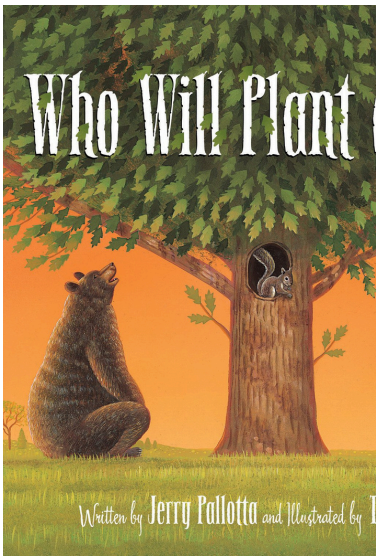
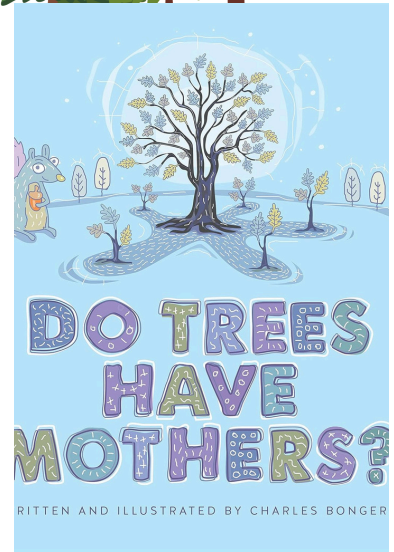
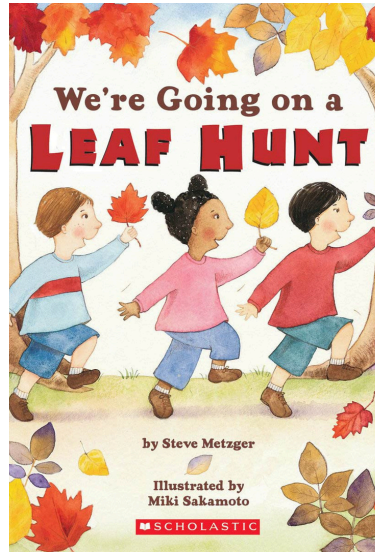
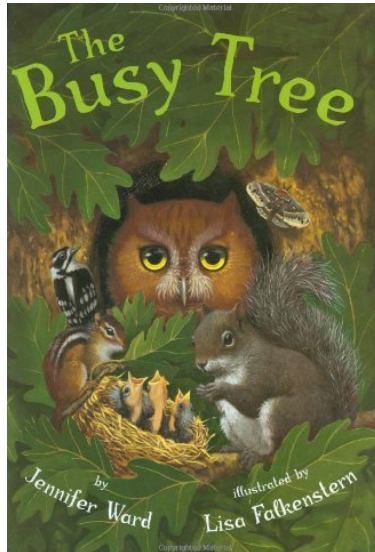
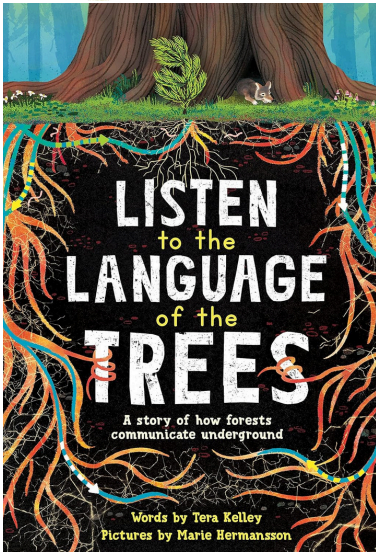
- Spring: Do you see buds, flowers, or tiny leaves?
- Summer: Are the leaves big, green, and shady?
- Fall: What colors are the leaves? Are they falling?
- Winter: Is the tree bare? Can you see the branches better?

Draw a picture or say one word to describe the tree each season.



*Photos courtesy of Kelsey O'Brien*

# 12 BOOKS ABOUT TREES



# 12 BOOKS ABOUT TREES

*Listen to the Language of Trees* by Tera Kelley, Illustrated by Marie Hermansson

*The Busy Tree* by Jennifer Ward, Illustrated by Lisa Falkenstern

*We're going on A Leaf Hunt* by Steve Metzger, Illustrated by Miki Sakamoto

*Do Trees Have Mothers?* by Charles Bongers

*Who Will Plant a Tree?* by Jerry Pallotta, Illustrated by Tom Leonard

*Tall Tall Tree* by Anthony D. Fredericks, Illustrated by Chad Wallace

*The City Tree* by Shira Boss, Illustrated by Lorena Alvarez

*Be a Tree!* by Maria Gianferrari, Illustrated by Felicita Sala

*Abuela's Wishing Tree* by Mitzi Fernandez Spitzer, Illustrated by Julia Sarapata de Carvalho

*A Tree Grows Up* by Marfe Ferguson Delano

*A Tree is Home* by Pamela Hickman, Illustrated by Zafouko Yamamoto

*Leaf Man* by Lois Ehlert

**Visit your local library to find these books  
and others about trees!**



# TREES EARLY LEARNING ACTIVITY: APPROACHES TO LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

## Tree Detective Play

Ages: 3-7

### What You Need

- Trees nearby (yard, park, sidewalk, or school grounds)
- Your eyes, hands, and imagination
- Optional: paper and crayons

### How to Play

1. Look Closely
  - Choose one tree.
    - Ask your child to notice: Is the tree tall or short? Is the bark smooth or rough? Are there leaves, needles, or none?
2. Compare & Sort
  - Visit another tree.
    - Ask: "How is this tree the same?" "How is it different?"
  - Let children group trees by size, leaf shape, or texture.
3. Solve a Tree Problem
  - Ask playful questions: "Which tree gives the most shade?" "Which tree would be best for a bird?"
  - Encourage children to explain their thinking.
4. Apply What They Learned
  - Have your child point to a tree and say: "I know this tree because..."
  - They can draw it, describe it, or act like it in the wind.

This activity helps children practice curiosity, focus, flexibility, and thinking skills as they explore, compare, and explain what they notice, key parts of learning how to learn through play.

### Approaches to Learning through Play Skills Your Child is Learning:

Curiosity & Initiative  
Observation Skills  
Problem-Solving  
Persistence & Focus

Flexible Thinking  
Applying Knowledge  
Confidence & Independence

# TREES EARLY LEARNING ACTIVITY: SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Tree Feelings Circle

Ages: 3-7

### What You Need

- A tree nearby (yard, park, or sidewalk)
- A quiet moment together
- Optional: a small rock or leaf

### How to Play

1. Sit by a Tree
  - Invite your child to sit or stand near a tree.
  - Take a deep breath together and notice the tree.
2. Name Feelings
  - Ask gentle questions: "How do you feel right now?" "If this tree had feelings, what would it feel?"
  - Offer choices if helpful (happy, calm, tired, excited).
3. Tree Breathing
  - Pretend to be a tree: Feet are roots, Arms are branches
  - Breathe in slowly (branches up), breathe out slowly (branches down).
4. Share & Connect
  - Take turns sharing one thing that made you feel good today
  - You can pass a leaf or rock when it's someone's turn.

This activity helps children identify emotions, calm their bodies, feel heard, and connect with others, using nature as a peaceful and supportive setting.

### Social-Emotional Skills Your Child is Learning:

Emotional Awareness

Self-Regulation & Calming Skills

Empathy

Mindfulness & Focus

Communication of Feelings

Confidence & Sense of Safety

Social Connection & Turn-Taking

# TREES EARLY LEARNING ACTIVITY: LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

## Tree Word Walk

**Ages:** 3-7

## What You Need

- Trees nearby (yard, park, neighborhood, or playground)
- Your voices and curiosity
- Optional: paper and crayons

## How to Play

### 1. Name What You See

- Stand near a tree and point to different parts: Trunk, Leaves, Branches, Roots (talk about where they are)
- Say the words together.

### 2. Describe the Tree

- Ask your child questions like: "Is the bark rough or smooth?" "Are the leaves big or small?"
- Encourage full sentences if possible, but single words are great too.

### 3. Tree Sounds & Rhymes

- Make up a silly rhyme or sound about the tree: "Tall tree, small tree, wiggly-wiggly tree!"
- Clap or tap to the rhythm of the words.

### 4. Tell a Tree Story

- Invite your child to imagine: "Who might live in this tree?"
- Help them tell a short story using their ideas.

This activity builds language skills through conversation, description, and storytelling, helping children learn new words and express ideas while exploring nature.

## Language and Literacy Skills Your Child is Learning:

Vocabulary Development

Expressive Language

Listening & Comprehension

Descriptive Language

Phonological Awareness

Storytelling & Narrative Skills

Confidence in Communication

# TREES EARLY LEARNING ACTIVITY: MATHEMATICAL THINKING & EXPRESSION

## Tree Math Walk

Ages: 3-7

### What You Need

- Trees nearby (yard, park, neighborhood)
- Your eyes and fingers
- Optional: paper and crayons

### How to Play

1. Count the Trees
  - Walk together and count how many trees you see.
  - Count out loud, touching or pointing to each tree.
2. Compare Trees
  - Ask questions like: "Which tree is taller?" "Which tree has more branches?"
  - Use words such as more, less, same, tall, short.
3. Measure with Your Body
  - Have children: Wrap arms around a trunk or take steps from one tree to another
  - Ask: "How many steps did it take?"
4. Sort & Group
  - Group trees by what you notice: Big vs. small, Leaves vs. needles

This activity helps children use math to count, compare, measure, and explain ideas, building early number sense through real-world exploration.

### Mathematical Thinking & Expression Skills Your Child is Learning:

Counting & Number Sense  
Comparing Quantities & Size  
Measuring & Estimating  
Sorting & Classifying

Using Math Language  
Problem-Solving  
Connecting Math to the Real World

# TREES EARLY LEARNING ACTIVITY: SCIENTIFIC THINKING & TECHNOLOGY

Tree Science Explorer

Ages: 3-7

## What You Need

- A tree nearby (yard, park, or neighborhood)
- A simple "tool" (magnifying glass, phone camera, or binoculars)
- Optional: paper and crayons

## How to Play

1. Observe Like a Scientist
  - Look closely at the tree using your eyes or a tool.
  - Notice: Bark patterns, Leaves or needles, Bugs, birds, or holes
2. Ask Questions
  - Encourage curiosity with questions like: "What do you think lives in this tree?" "Why do you think the bark looks like that?"
3. Make a Prediction
  - Ask: "What do you think will change if we come back in a different season?"
  - Talk about possible answers together.
4. Use Technology
  - Take a photo or short video of the tree.
  - Compare it later to see changes over time (new leaves, color changes).

This activity introduces children to scientific thinking, like observing, asking questions, predicting, and using tools, while helping them understand that technology can help them learn about the world around them.

## Scientific Thinking & Technology Skills Your Child is Learning:

Observation Skills

Curiosity & Questioning

Predicting & Reasoning

Understanding Cause & Effect

Using Tools & Technology

Comparing Over Time

Communication of Ideas

Confidence as a Learner

# TREES EARLY LEARNING ACTIVITY: SOCIAL-STUDIES

## Trees in Our Community

**Ages:** 3-7

### What You Need

- Trees nearby (yard, park, school, or neighborhood)
- A short walk and conversation

### How to Play

1. Look Around Your Community
  - Walk together and notice trees in your area.
  - Ask: "Where do we see trees?" "Why do you think trees are here?"
2. Talk About What Trees Do for People
  - Share simple ideas: Trees give shade. Trees help animals, Trees make places beautiful
3. Connect to Community Helpers
  - Ask: "Who helps take care of trees?"
  - Talk about gardeners, park workers, or community volunteers.
4. Practice Caring for Shared Spaces
  - Invite your child to think of ways to help: Picking up litter near trees, Watering a tree at home, Being gentle with branches and leaves

This activity helps children understand that trees are part of their community, that people work together to care for shared spaces, and that they can play a role in helping their community.

### Social Studies Skills Your Child is Learning:

Community Awareness

Understanding Roles & Responsibilities

Civic Responsibility

Environmental Awareness

Sense of Belonging

Communication & Listening

Decision-Making

# TREES EARLY LEARNING ACTIVITY: CREATIVE THINKING AND EXPRESSION

## Tree Art Imagination Play

**Ages:** 3-7

### What You Need

- A tree to observe (yard, park, or neighborhood)
- Paper and crayons, markers, or chalk
- Optional: leaves, sticks, or bark rubbings (no picking from living trees)

### How to Play

1. Look & Imagine
  - Stand near a tree and ask: "What does this tree remind you of?" "If this tree could tell a story, what would it say?"
2. Create Tree Art
  - Invite your child to draw the tree—or turn it into something imaginary: A tree house, A friendly face, A home for animals
3. Express Through Movement
  - Pretend to be the tree: Stretch like tall branches or Sway like leaves in the wind
  - Children can express ideas by drawing, moving, pointing, or storytelling
4. Share the Creation
  - Let your child talk about, point to, or act out their artwork or idea.
  - Celebrate every idea—there is no "right" way to create.

This activity encourages children to use imagination, express ideas creatively, and communicate through art and movement, helping them build confidence and joy in creative expression.

### **Creative Thinking and Expression Skills Your Child is Learning:**

Imagination & Creativity

Artistic Expression

Symbolic Thinking

Self-Expression

Creative Movement

Communication Skills

Confidence & Joy in Creating

# TREES EARLY LEARNING ACTIVITY: HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

## Tree Stretch & Move Break

Ages: 3-7

### What You Need

- A tree nearby (yard, park, or neighborhood)
- Comfortable space to move
- Your imagination!

### How to Play

1. Stand Like a Tree
  - Have children stand tall like a tree trunk.
  - Feet are roots planted on the ground.
2. Stretch the Branches
  - Reach arms up high like branches growing.
  - Stretch side to side like branches in the wind.
3. Balance Like a Tree
  - Try standing on one foot like a tree with one strong root.
  - Switch feet if able.
4. Shake & Relax
  - Gently shake arms and legs like leaves rustling.
  - Take a slow breath in and out together.

Movements can be done:

- Standing, sitting, or supported
- Big or small—any effort counts
- Children may watch, copy, or participate in their own way

This activity encourages healthy movement, balance, stretching, and calm breathing, helping children build physical strength, body awareness, and positive feelings about being active.

### Health, Wellness, and Physical Development Skills Your Child is Learning:

Gross Motor Skills

Balance & Coordination

Body Awareness

Flexibility & Strength

Self-Regulation & Calming

Positive Attitudes Toward Physical Activity

Confidence & Participation

# EXPLORE MORE!

Check out these resources to explore more of trees in Pennsylvania!

- [Pennsylvania State Parks](#)
- [Awbury Arboretum \(Philadelphia, PA\)](#)
- [Chatham Arboretum \(Pittsburgh, PA\)](#)
- [Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens \(Devon, PA\)](#)
- [Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier Park \(Erie, PA\)](#)
- [The Arboretum at Penn State \(State College, PA\)](#)
- [The Arboretum \(Reading, PA\)](#)
- [The Tanger Arboretum \(Lancaster, PA\)](#)
- [Ambler Arboretum \(Ambler, PA\)](#)
- [Learning is in Our Nature \(Project Learning Tree\)](#)
- [PA State Parks, Forests and Geology Interactive Map \(PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources\)](#)
- [Maps of Native Trees and Plants in Pennsylvania \(PlantMaps\)](#)
- [PA Plants Native](#)
- [Tree Pennsylvania](#)
- [DCNR GeoTrail](#)