

YOUNG EXPLORERS



Mass Audubon

FALL LEAVES Scavenger Hunt

Fall is Unbe-leaf-able!

The sky is falling! Oh wait...it's just leaves falling from the trees. With many trees dropping their leaves this time of year in preparation for winter, fall is the perfect time to go out and explore the many colors, shapes, and textures that leaves have to offer.

Shapes

Did you know that you can identify a tree by the shape of its leaves? Pine trees grow thin needles, maples have points like a star, and oaks are "lobed" with rounded or pointed edges that stick out. Some leaves are shaped like hearts or teardrops or even fans. One type of tree, called sassafras, has three different shapes of leaf on the same plant.

Colors

In the fall when the length of daylight gets shorter and the temperatures drop, plants stop making food from sunlight. The "food factories" inside leaves—known as chlorophyll—break down and their green color fades, allowing other colors within the leaf to show. This is why we see yellows, reds, and oranges each autumn. Different factors can affect what colors come out each fall, including the amount of sun on each leaf or how much sugar remains inside the leaf.

Textures

Have you ever felt a furry leaf? A stiff leaf? A sharp one? Leaves come in many different textures. An evergreen leaf or needle has a waxy coating to help ice and snow slip off of it. Lamb's ear is as soft as...you guessed it, a lamb's ear! The thick fuzz helps prevent moisture from being lost on hot days. And holly has very sharp points on its edges to protect the leaves from being eaten.

Get Curious!

The next time you go out for a walk with a grown-up, explore some of the different textures that leaves offer and think of some possible reasons why the leaves have that texture or shape. Just be on the lookout for poison ivy and remember: Leaves of three, don't touch me!



Find more information and activities online at massaudubon.org/youngexplorers.



Fan-shaped leaf



Leaf with sharp points



Three different shapes of leaf on the same plant



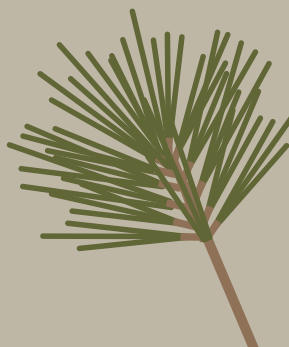
Bright red leaf



Leaf with 3 holes



Leaf with waxy coating



Multi-colored leaf

