



Nature Play: Identifying Trees

One of the things we did in preparation for the North Pond Nature Sanctuary Restoration was a tree survey (learn more at <http://lincolnparkconservancy.org/the-campaign-for-north-pond/>). The survey told us not only what trees are around the pond, but also coordinates telling us where they are so that we can map the trees and use the data digitally. The survey also tells us how big the trees are, their overall health and general condition.

You too can learn about the trees that are in your neighborhood by looking at their bark and making a tree bark rubbing. After you have made the rubbing you can hang it up as art, or can include it in your own, home made field guide to take with you next time.

Materials: blank paper; crayon (without paper), soft pencil, chalk, or charcoal stick; tape; different types of trees.

Guiding Questions: Have you ever looked very closely at tree bark? How is the bark from different trees different? Do the same kind of trees have similar bark? Why do you think that is? How could we record what the tree bark looks like? Why do trees have bark?

NOTE for Grownups: it is fun to do these activities with your children, but remember they (not you), should be the ones leading the activity. Letting them lead helps them to learn confidence and problem-solving skills.

Directions to make a rubbing of tree bark:

1. Take a sheet of paper and a crayon (or several) with you on a walk.
2. Find a tree with interesting bark. It can be very smooth, or deeply grooved, or shaggy, or whatever else catches your attention.
3. Put your sheet of paper against the tree. Ask a friend for help to hold the paper in place or use your tape to keep it still.
4. Use the side of your crayon or piece of charcoal and rub it against the paper. You may have to experiment with how hard you push. Do you get a better impression when you push hard or when you push lightly? You can also experiment with colors. Do you use just one color, or do you use many?
5. When you are done, remove your sheet of paper and look at your creation.
6. Label your bark rubbing. Ask a parent or use a simple tree ID (see link below) to identify what kind of tree it is. Does it look different from another species of tree? Can you use your rubbing to identify the tree next time?
7. Make your own tree identification guide using your bark rubbing, and photographs of the tree and closeups of the bark. Take with you on your next walk and use it to identify trees.

Explore more tree bark rubbing and identification ideas and lesson plans:

<https://treesforlife.org.uk/into-the-forest/habitats-and-ecology/ecology/tree-bark/>

<https://greenacorns.wordpress.com/2013/10/05/wild-discovery-weekend-identifying-trees-by-their-bark/>

<https://kcedventures.com/blog/art-and-science-of-leaf-rubbings-nature-activity>

<https://lifestyle.howstuffworks.com/crafts/home-crafts/easy-outdoor-activities-for-kids4.htm>

<https://woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2019/11/tree-bark-crafts/>

<https://fieldguides.fieldmuseum.org/guides/guide/500>

<https://craftinvaders.co.uk/bark-rubbing-exploring-trees/>

<https://kathrynrandall.com/2017/10/23/make-it-monday-tree-bark-rubbings/>

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Images from the Web

