

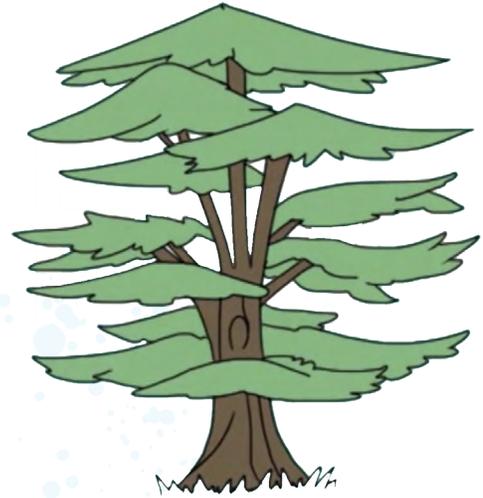


ADOPT A TREE

GRADES K-8

MATERIALS

Pencils
Notebooks for each student
Crayons with paper removed for leaf rubbing
Camera (if taking photos of trees)



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Students will choose a tree in their schoolyard that they will observe throughout the year. They will get to know their tree in every season, witnessing firsthand the changes that a tree experiences over the course of the year. Students will record their observations in notebooks.

If you are working with younger students, adopt a class tree that you can observe throughout the year together.

Ideally, starting this project at the beginning of the school year (fall) will provide the best overview of the tree throughout the year.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Explain that each student will pick his or her own tree, and that they will be observing their tree throughout the school year.
2. Provide each student with a notebook, and explain that the notebooks will be used to record observations and answer questions about their tree. Be sure to tell your students to date the pages in their notebooks! You can have the students decorate their notebooks.
3. Have the students write the following questions on the first pages of their notebooks:
 - Where is your tree located?
 - Is your tree alive? How can you tell? Is it healthy?
 - Do you think your tree is young, grown-up, or old? Why?

- Can you reach the lowest branch? About how tall is the lowest branch?
 - Do your arms reach around the tree?
 - Do you know what kind of tree you adopted?
 - Does your tree have any fruits, nuts, or seeds that help identify it?
 - Are any animals on or near your tree? Don't forget to look for small animals!
 - Are there any signs that animals have used your tree in the past?
4. Take students outside and let each choose a tree. After they have chosen their tree, have them record answers to the questions they wrote down.
 5. Instruct students to write a paragraph or draw a picture of their tree in their notebooks. If possible, have the students collect a fallen leaf from their tree and make a leaf rubbing in their notebook.
 6. Have the students visit their trees at least once a month. Each time they visit, have them write a few sentences or make sketches in their notebook describing any changes they notice. Here are some ideas for activities to use with future visits:
 - Write poems about their trees.
 - Keep a running list of the animals they find on their trees.
 - Compare and contrast their trees from one season to the next.
 - Examine twigs from their trees in every season.
 - Create fictional stories about their trees.
 - Create informational brochures or flyers about their trees.
 - Organize a tree tour day where they invite students from other classes and/or parents and families to visit their trees and learn about them.
 - Create tree phenology wheels like these:
<http://partnersinplace.com/gallery/view/witness-tree-studio-day>
 - Free digital copy of phenology wheels to use in the classroom:
<http://partnersinplace.com/products/view/digital-wheels>

If you are doing this activity with younger students, have each student draw a picture of the class tree. Discuss the characteristics of the tree with the class each time you visit it. Take pictures of your tree throughout the year and hang them up in a visible spot in your classroom. Use those pictures to discuss how your tree has changed throughout the year.

Adapted from "Project Learning Tree: Environmental Education Activity Guide," and "Hands-On Nature: Information and Activities for Exploring the Environment with Children."