

Find Tree Seeds and Plant A Tree!

Grades: K - 8

Time outdoors searching for seeds; 20-30 mins for planting seeds, then a long wait for germination

Lesson summary:

Find tree seeds and plant a tree.

Outcomes or purpose:

- Children will discover that trees produce a variety of different types of seeds.

Teacher background:

All trees produce seeds. Many trees have flowers in spring, though they are often small. Tree flowers are pollinated by insects or the wind. Check your yard or your neighbourhood in spring to see the flowers produced by trees. Harvesting seeds is usually done in the fall, when they fall to the ground. However, if you look closely you may find last years' tree seeds in spring too. You can grow a tree from seed, though it takes a long time for your tree to grow tall when it begins producing its own flowers and seeds.

Materials needed:

- **Plastic plant pots** (at least 4" wide), or make your own pots using recycled 500 ml yogurt containers. Just be sure to make 2 or 3 holes in the bottom for drainage.

- **Potting soil**

- **Clear plastic bag** (if growing indoors)

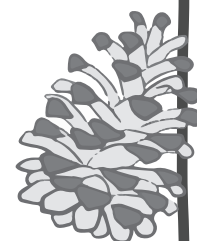
- **Tree Seeds:**

- **Cones:** Evergreen trees like spruce, pine or tamarack produce cones. Collect the cones and place one or two inside a paper bag. Put the paper bag in a warm place for a week or two. As they dry, the small seeds tucked in the cone scales should loosen and drop out.

- **Nuts:** Bur oak trees produce cute little acorns which animals like squirrels and some birds like to eat. They sprout easily.

- **Samaras:** A samara is a really cool type of seed produced by elm, ash and maple trees. Samaras are flat and papery which helps them to fly long distances. A samara contains a seed inside the papery cover. Elm samaras are round, ash are long and slender, while maple samaras have two wings that may remind you of a helicopter! The whole samara can be planted.

- **Fruits:** Some trees like mountain ash, chokecherry and pincherry produce small berries. Mountain ash berries are bright orange, chokecherries are dark red and pincheries are bright red. These fruits often stay on the tree over winter which is good because birds love to eat them! Simply squish to find the seed inside the berries.



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Step by step instructions:

1.

Go for a seed collecting expedition in your yard, neighbourhood, local park or the countryside.

2.

After your expedition, fill pots with potting soil almost to the top. Place seeds in the pot about twice as deep as the seed is long. Cover with a little more soil and gently pat the seed in place. Water it well.

3.

You can place your pot(s) in a shady place outside. If you are growing your tree indoors, cover the pot with a clear plastic bag until it sprouts. This will help to keep the soil moist.

4.

Check your pots every day. Water them as needed to keep the soil moist.

5.

Be patient! Tree seeds can take a long time to sprout.

6.

Keep growing your tree. To keep it going over the winter, bury the pot up to the rim just before the soil freezes. Or, plant your tree directly in the soil. Be sure to select a nice open space with enough room for your little tree to grow big and tall.

Discussion questions

- What surprised you about the seeds you collected?

Expand the learning:

- Decorate your pot before planting your tree seeds.
- Use extra seeds for art and craft projects.
- Observe trees in your yard or neighbourhood in spring and fall to see how they produce flowers and then seeds.

