

# A Tree for All Seasons



## Introduction

In the book *Jo MacDonald Hiked in the Woods*, author Mary Quattlebaum introduces children to the trees, plants, and creatures of a forest and models safe, courteous behavior in the wild. In this activity, children focus on one tree for a year as they learn about seasonal changes and trees as resources and create a classroom scrapbook/display of observations and photos.

## Materials Needed

- ◆ Large, nearby tree
- ◆ Camera
- ◆ Classroom scrapbook or display board



## Procedure

1. At the beginning of school year or a particular season, choose a large nearby tree for classroom study.
2. Explain that trees are important resources. The way they make food produces oxygen for humans and other creatures to breathe (see *Trees Make Their Own Food* section in book). Humans also use the bark, seeds, and wood of trees to produce things. Show everyday items made of wood (paper, cinnamon, ruler, maple syrup, wooden toy, etc.) For extensive list, see <http://forestinfo.org/kids/documents/4e22bc91fcbd968bad6b55f7a4f3dc711133223478.pdf> Have children find things made from trees in classroom and bring in something from home to show. Make a list for scrapbook/display board and add to it throughout the year.
3. Visit chosen tree and guide children to identify and touch its important parts (roots, trunk, branches, twigs, crown, and leaves; see *Tree Time* activity for more detail). Have them gently touch the bark and look for fruit (acorns, maple "wings," etc.). Take two photos—one of tree alone and one of tree with children. Look for and record on a class list for scrapbook the animals, birds, insects, and fungus that are around, on, or using the tree, any fallen branches, or fruit. What are they doing? Look for moss.
4. Bring one leaf and one fruit back to classroom and include leaf/fruit and photo in class scrapbook or on display board.
5. Repeat step 3 every month or every two weeks till school ends. Encourage children to visit tree on their own as well.
6. At year-end, discuss what children learned about trees. How do trees help people, including providing shade and beauty? What did each child like about this special tree? What creatures did they observe using it at different times of year? Ask children to write a short thank-you note to tree and draw its picture.
7. Visit tree and read these aloud. (Young children should just say their thank-you aloud.)
8. Display the notes and pictures in scrapbook or on board. Discuss the monthly photos of tree. How did it change over the year?

## Key Concepts

- ◆ Plants are the base of an ecosystem.
- ◆ All animals depend on plants.
- ◆ Resources are things we get from the living and nonliving environment to meet the needs and wants of a population.
- ◆ Some resources are basic (air, water, soil).
- ◆ Some resources are produced (food, fuel, building materials).
- ◆ Some resources are nonmaterial (beauty).
- ◆ Weather changes from day to day and over the seasons.
- ◆ Plan and conduct a simple systematic observation or investigation.
- ◆ Communicate or analyze investigations that might be drawn and spoken as well as written.

# A Tree for All Seasons



## Nature Connections

- ◆ Ask children to stand very still and pretend to be trees. Ask them to listen to surrounding sounds and to feel the wind or warmth on their faces. Talk about what they noticed by being still that they might not by moving around. Write a classroom poem (one line per child) about what the tree experiences or individual poems or stories.
- ◆ Talk about the importance of protecting trees, both as resources and for their beauty. Mention how environmentalist John Muir and President Teddy Roosevelt worked to create national parks to protect trees and wildlife. Read aloud Wangari's Trees of Peace by Jeanette Winter or Planting the Trees of Kenya by Claire Nivola. Muir, Roosevelt, and Wangari Maathi all helped to protect trees in big ways. But we can all help in small ways. Brainstorm with children ways of protecting trees such as recycling, and begin to recycle in classroom.
- ◆ Share amazing tree facts: A bristlecone pine tree called Methuselah is the world's longest living single tree, at 4,844 years old. And at 380 feet, a coastal redwood named Hyperion ranks as the world's tallest tree. It towers as high as a 38-story building. Both trees are in California.

## Additional Resources

- ◆ **A Tree for All Seasons** by Robin Bernard
- ◆ **A Tree Is a Plant** by Clyde Robert Bulla, illustrated by Stacey Schuett
- ◆ **Tell Me, Tree: All About Trees for Kids** by Gail Gibbons
- ◆ **Be a Friend to Trees** by Patricia Lauber
- ◆ **The Tree in the Ancient Forest** by Carol Reed-Jones, illustrated by Christopher Canyon
- ◆ **National Arbor Day Explore**  
<http://www.arborday.org/explore/>

