Leaf Collection Project

Leaf collecting is a good way to learn about the trees that live in your area. Collecting leaves will also help you to learn how to:

- 1. identify individual leaf characteristics and
- 2. use different taxonomic keys.

**Assignment:** You are to create a leaf collection booklet containing leaves from **10** different species of trees. Your collection must contain at least **8** leaves from broadleaf trees. You may choose your remaining two specimens from broadleaf, needle-leaf or scale-leaf trees. Only trees listed in *The Audubon Society Field Guide to Trees* are acceptable. Bushes and shrubs are not allowed.

**Materials needed:**

- leaf press (directions follow)
- sturdy paper for mounting
- black ink pen
- index cards
- glue/tape
- taxonomic keys/field guides
- paper towels/newspaper

**Directions for making a leaf press**

- 1. Cut 1 square of cardboard roughly 15 inches by 15 inches in size.
- 2. Place the cardboard on a hard surface out of the way of young children and pets. Place five (5) pieces of paper towels or 5 pieces of newspaper on top of the cardboard.
- 3. Arrange a few of your leaves on the paper towels/newspaper.
- 4. Cover with 5 additional pieces of paper towels/newspaper.
- 5. Repeat with an additional layer of leaves and another layer of paper towels/newspaper.
- 6. Finish with another 15” by 15” cardboard square.
- 7. Place several heavy books on top of your press.
- 8. Change the paper towels/newspaper every 2 or 3 days.
- 9. Depending on the size of your leaves, you may have to construct an additional leaf press.

**Collecting and Pressing Your Leaves**

- 1. Always get permission before collecting leaves on someone else’s property.
- 2. Collect at least two of each type of leaf in case one of the leaves tears. If leaves are damaged or torn, don’t use them because you will not receive full credit.
- 3. Be sure to remove an entire leaf, not a leaflet, from the tree and place it in your press as soon as possible.
- 4. Leaves should remain in the press for 3 - 5 days depending on their thickness and moisture content. Remember to change the newspaper or paper towels when needed.
- 5. Keep the press in an area where little children or pets can’t get at it.

**Labeling Your Leaves**

- 1. Make labels that are 3” by 5”. You may use index cards or white paper for your labels.
- 2. You may either type or handprint your information. Do not cross out or white out mistakes on the labels; rewrite them. Labels must be neat and easy to read. Use only black ink whether you are typing or writing your labels.
- 3. Each label must contain the following information:
  - a. Common name of leaf
  - b. Scientific name of leaf – Genus (capitalized) and species (lowercase)
o c. Tree type – broad-leaf, needle-leaf, scale leaf
o d. If your specimen is from a broadleaf tree, then the following information is also required:
  ▪ 1. Leaf type – simple or compound
  ▪ 2. Leaf margin – smooth, toothed or lobed
  ▪ 3. Vein pattern – parallel, palmate or pinnate

Mounting Your Leaves

- 1. Use pieces of sturdy paper to mount your leaves.
- 2. Each page must have only one type of leaf on it.
- 3. Arrange the leaf so there is room to glue the label at the bottom of the page. The leaf should look nice on the page. Use tape to mount needle- or scale-leaves to the paper.
- 4. Use a small amount of glue to adhere the completed label. Center the label below the leaf.
- 5. LET THE PAGES DRY COMPLETELY BEFORE ASSEMBLING THEM TOGETHER IN YOUR COLLECTION OR THE PAGES WILL STICK TOGETHER!!
- 6. Make a front cover for your collection. Include the following items on your cover:
  o   a. title
  o   b. your name
  o   c. an appropriate illustration (no glitter, please!)
- 7. Use ribbon, string, etc. to bind the pages together.

On-line Leaf Identification Guides

Virginia Tech - Use this site first to find the common name of your tree
Ohio Public Library Information Network - Use this site next to find the scientific name of your tree
Arbor Day Foundation