

What Plant is This?



<i>Objective</i>	Make learning how to identify plants a fun and painless activity! Use these activities to teach basic ID terms and then put them to use identifying invasive plants in the field.
<i>Audience</i>	1 or more participants; all ages
<i>Duration</i>	15-20 minutes
<i>Materials</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plant samples, or living plants you can gather everyone around• “<i>What Plant is This?</i>” Identification Terms Sheet and/or Identification Worksheet (<i>next pages</i>)• <i>Optional</i> -<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Field Guide○ Pruners (to look at pith)○ Magnifying Glass
<i>Background</i>	The key to teaching successful plant identification skills is to teach to the level of the group. Engaged or advanced groups might be keen to learn the difference between bi-pinnate, pinnate, and palmate leaves, while younger or less engaged groups might be content with toothed vs. smooth leaf edges. Luckily, there are a variety of ways to teach ID skills, and many can be adapted for multiple situations.
<i>Procedure</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Hand out plant samples or look closely at a plant. Ask participants what they notice first.2. Build on their responses. If they say the leaves are green, ask them to compare the color to other leaves on neighboring plants.3. If they don’t hit all the ID points, guide them towards the answers. Instead of saying “The leaves are rough” pass around some leaf examples and ask how they would describe the texture.4. The main characteristics to go over are:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Leaf edge: smooth, serrated, lobedb. Leaf shape: egg shaped, oval, round, etc.c. Leaf arrangement: opposite, alternated. Leaf and bark texture: smooth, rough, soft, etc.e. Leaf and bark colorf. Pith color5. Different groups will be able to go more (or less) in depth with ID terms depending on their age, background, and level of engagement. It’s important not to overwhelm a group with more information than they want. Determine their interest level by their engagement.6. Many participants will point out flowers and berries. While these are useful, they will not be present on all specimens, especially young plants.7. After going over ID terms, ask participants to find the species growing on site. After they find an example, ask them how they know what plant it is, and make sure they use their new ID vocabulary.

What Plant is This?

Identification Terms

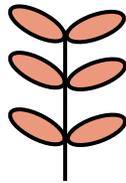
Arrangement

How are the leaves arranged on the branch?



Alternate

VS.



Opposite

Leaf Shape

What shape are the leaves?

Round Teardrop
Egg-shaped Oval
Pointed tip

What size are the leaves?

Small, medium, large

Bark

What does the bark look like?

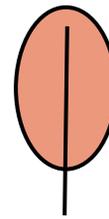
Smooth Lenticels
Rough Color
Peeling Cambium color

Edge

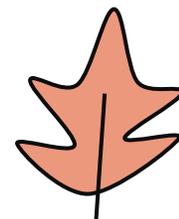
What does the edge of the leaf look like?



Toothed/
Serrated



Smooth



Lobed

Pith

Cut a branch. What does the pith look like?

Hollow Solid Color?

Texture

How do the leaves feel?

Rough Soft
Hairy waxy
Smooth

Fruits, Thorns, & Flowers

Does the plant have flowers?

Color Shape
Smell

Does the plant have fruits?

Few or many?
Color?

Does the plant have thorns?

Woody vs. Herbaceous

Is the plant woody or herbaceous?

What Plant is This?

Identification Worksheet

1) How are the leaves arranged on the branch?



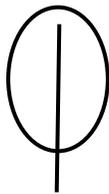
B. Opposite



A. Alternate

2) What does the leaf feel like?

3) What does the edge of the leaf look like?



B. Smooth/ Entire



A. Toothed/ Serrated

4) How would you describe the color and shape of the leaf?

5) How would you describe the pith?

6) What does the bark look like?

a. Color:

b. Texture:

c. Other:

Do you notice anything else about the plant?