

Tree Identification: from bark and leaves or needles

A walk in the woods can be a lot of fun, especially if you bring your kids. How do you get them to come along with you? Tell them this. “Look at the bark on the trees. Can you find any that look like burnt potato chips, warts, cat scratches, camouflage pants or rippling muscles?” Believe it or not, these are descriptions of different kinds of tree bark.

Tree ID from bark:

Black cherry: The bark looks like burnt potato chips.

Hackberry: The bark is bumpy and warty.

Ironwood: The bark has long thin strips. With a little imagination, an ironwood can look like it is used as a scratching post by cats. They can also be easily spotted in winter because their light brown dead leaves hang on well past the first snow.

Sycamore: A tree with bark that looks like camouflaged pants. The largest tree in Illinois is a sycamore, a majestic 115-foot tree near Springfield.

Musclewood: a tree with smooth gray bark covering a trunk with ridges that look like they are rippling muscles.

Shagbark hickory: Long strips of shaggy bark peeling at both ends.

Cottonwood: Has heavy ridges that make it look like Paul Bunyan’s corduroy pants.

Bur oak: Thick and gnarly bark has deep craggy furrows. The corky bark allows it to easily withstand hot forest fires.

Tree ID from leaves or needles:

Willow Oak: Has elongated leaves similar to those of a willow tree.

Red pine: Red has 3 letters; a red pine has groupings of 2-3 prickly needles.

White Pine: White has 5 letters; a white pine has groupings of 5 soft needles. On a breezy day, a forest of white pines comes alive with the sound of the wind whistling through the needles. It’s a wonderful, soothing sound that you can’t help but sit back and enjoy.

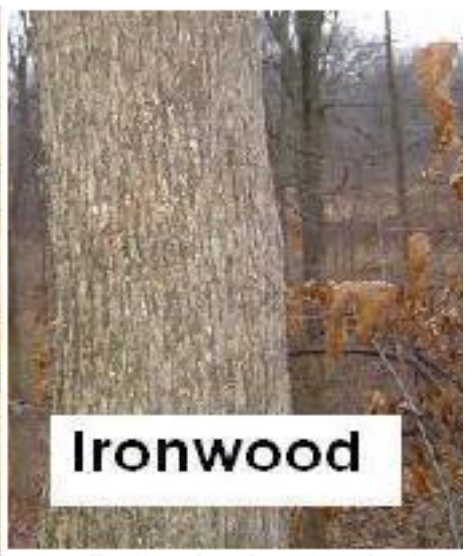
Tamarack: The only deciduous conifer. The needles turn smoky gold and drop almost all at once in autumn.



Black Cherry



Hackberry



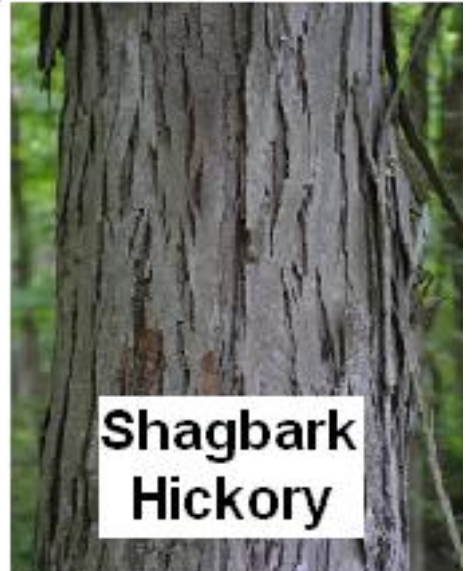
Ironwood



Sycamore



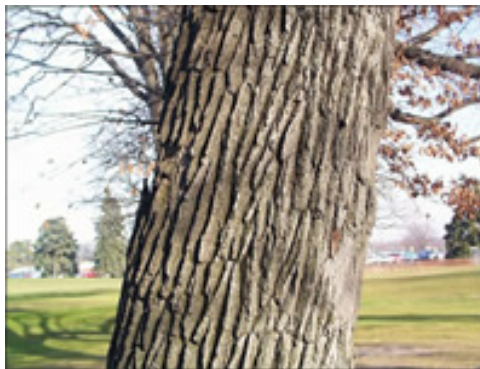
Musclewood



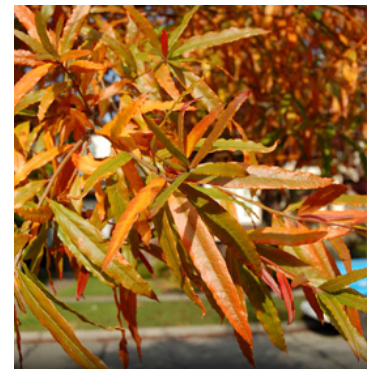
**Shagbark
Hickory**



Cottonwood



Bur Oak



Willow Oak



Red Pine



White Pine



Tamarack