

Leaf ID cheat sheet: four clues and the tricky twins

Three pages from the Sagestead Tree & Leaf ID Pack: the four clues that sort almost every tree, and how to tell sugar maple from red maple and white oak from red oak. Clip them to a board and go outside.

How to use it

- 1 Print pages 2 to 4 at 100% (Actual size). Cardstock lasts longer outdoors.
- 2 Pages 2 and 3: pick up a fallen leaf and check the four clues: simple or compound, pairs or staggered, the edge, the veins.
- 3 Page 4: found a maple or an oak? Look at the gaps, the teeth and the tips to name it.
- 4 Look at several leaves and at the twig, not just one leaf. Snap a photo of the whole tree and its bark.

Safety first

- Leaves of three, let it be: never touch a three-leaflet plant until a grown-up checks. It could be poison ivy or poison oak.
- Look, don't taste. Buckeye nuts are poisonous; walnut husks stain and ginkgo seed pulp can irritate skin.
- After walks in woods or tall grass, check for ticks, and wash hands when you get home.

Want the whole pack?

The full Tree & Leaf ID Pack has 24 field guide pages with true-size leaf rulers, a yes/no Leaf Key, 24 ID cards, a Fall Color Chart, leaf bingo, riddles, a quiz and Adopt a Tree, in US Letter and A4.

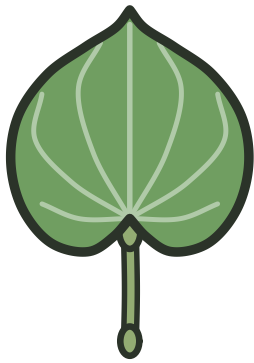
On Etsy: scan the code, or type sagestead.net/go/tree-id



Leaf Words: Leaf & Twig

Two questions that sort almost every tree.

Simple or compound?



SIMPLE
one blade on its stem



COMPOUND (feather)
leaflets along a stalk

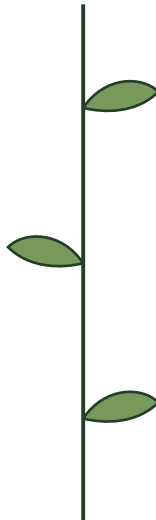


COMPOUND (hand)
leaflets from one point

In pairs or staggered?



OPPOSITE
leaves in pairs



ALTERNATE
one leaf at a time

Remember MAD Horse:

Maple, Ash, Dogwood and Horsechestnut (buckeyes) grow their leaves in pairs (almost always).

Most other trees you'll meet, like oaks, sycamore, sweetgum and tuliptree, are alternate.

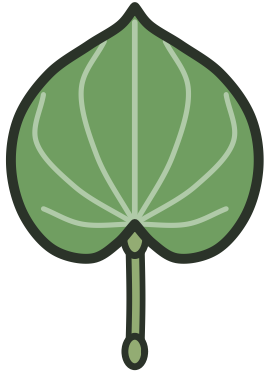
Check the twig, not the leaflets: a compound leaf's leaflets can pair up on any tree.



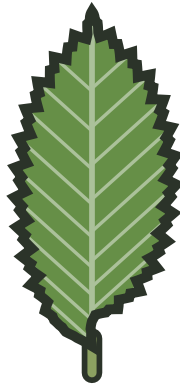
Leaf Words: Edge & Veins

Look closely: the edge and the veins tell a lot.

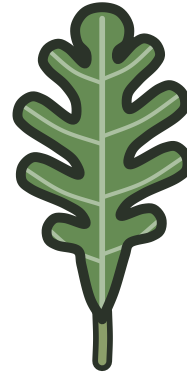
What does the edge look like?



SMOOTH
no teeth at all



TOOTHED
like a saw

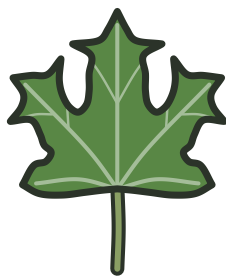


LOBED
big bumps or points

Which way do the veins go?



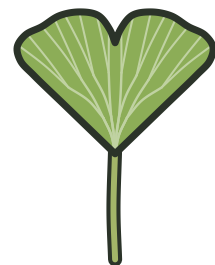
FEATHER
from a middle vein



HAND
from one point



RAINBOW
curving to the tip

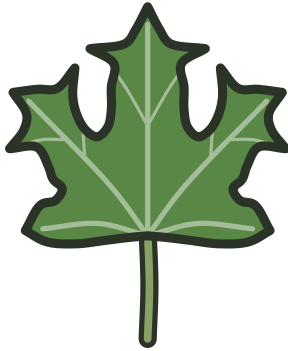


FAN
no middle vein



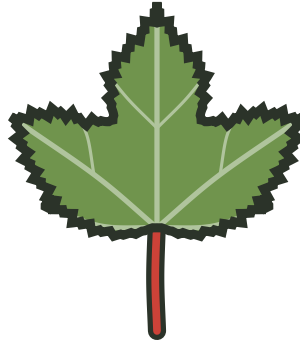
Tricky Twins: Maples & Oaks

Look at the gaps, the teeth and the tips.



Sugar maple

round U-shaped gaps
no fine teeth



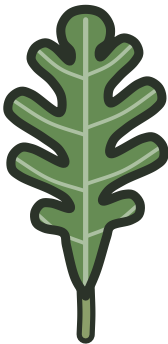
Red maple

sharp V-shaped gaps
sawtooth edge, red stem



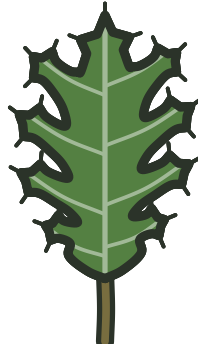
Silver maple

very deep cuts
silvery-white underside



White oak

rounded lobes
no bristle tips



Red oak

pointed lobes
tiny bristle on each tip



Live oak

no lobes at all!
look for acorns

Street-tree alert: Norway maple looks like sugar maple, but its leaf is wider than long and a snapped leaf stem oozes milky sap.

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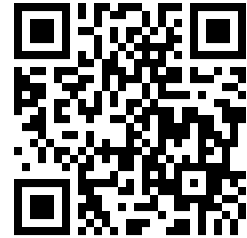
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Scan the code or type the address. Free sample from Sagestead · page 4 of 5



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