

Mystery Tree Challenge

Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 1
Program Levels: Junior, Cadette, Senior, Ambassador

Objective: Girls will begin to understand the concepts and processes involved in taxonomy and use these skills to identify several common trees at Camp Potomac Woods.



Materials Provided

- Tree Field Guides
- Basic Information on Tree Taxonomy*
- Tree Identity key
- Mystery Tree Worksheet
- Dry erase markers

Activity Steps

1. Begin by explaining to the girls that there is a scientific process used to classify plants and animals. This process is called **taxonomy** and it provides an organized system for grouping things based on certain “like” characteristics.
2. Using *Basic Information on Tree Taxonomy*, go over the different characteristics used in tree taxonomy (conifers, broadleaf trees, simple leaves, compound leaves, etc.)

Suggestion: For teen groups, have individuals or pairs of girls choose a characteristic and present it to the rest of the group.

3. Have girls split into small groups and give each pair a Mystery Tree worksheet, field guide(s), and dry erase marker(s).

4. Have each group choose a different numbered tree to start at. They should go through the different characteristics discussed and determine which groups their tree fits into (for example, maybe they have a broadleaf tree with simple, opposite, lobed leaves). They should note these characteristics on the worksheet.
5. Girls can then use the field guides to determine what their tree is.
6. Tree identities can be confirmed using the Tree Identity Key. If they are correct, they should choose another tree and repeat the process. If they are not, have them double-check each characteristic until they figure out where they went wrong.
7. Girls should identify as many trees as they can.

Suggestion: Make it a race! Have the girls see which team can identify all the trees first, or who can identify the most trees in a given period of time.

