

Connecting Kids to Nature

Try this activity in a forest—a natural place to learn!

For over 30 years, Project Learning Tree® has used the forest as a “window” to help young people gain an awareness of the world around them and their place within it. Blending a walk in the forest with a fun and engaging PLT activity creates a powerful learning experience for children of all ages. Here’s one idea in a series from PLT that introduces the concept of forest cycles.

www.plt.org

Activity 76: Tree Cookies

One way to learn about tree growth is to look at annual rings. Tree rings show patterns of change in a tree’s life as well as changes in the area where it grows. In this activity, you can trace environmental and historical changes using a cross section of a tree, or “tree cookie.”

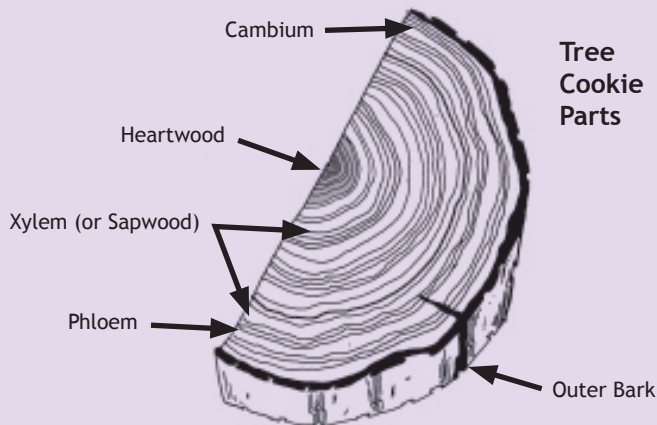
Doing the Activity

Have you ever counted tree rings? Every growth season, a tree adds a new layer of wood to its trunk and limbs. This means you can determine the age of a tree by counting its layers, or rings. Have children learn more about a tree’s life by examining a tree cookie and asking:

- How old was this part of the tree when the tree cookie was cut?
- Can you see different markings? Evidence of scars or narrow, misshapen rings?
- What might have happened to the tree to cause these different markings?

Use a hand lens to get a closer look at the tree cookie’s texture. Can you see any holes or channels that might allow water and nutrients to travel up the tree? Finally, ask children to draw a tree cookie the same age as themselves. What can they do to show when important events in their lives took place?

For a children’s book that describes the various parts of trees and their functions, check out *Outside and Inside Trees* by Sandra Markel, published by Simon and Schuster, 1993, ISBN: 0027623130.



Tree Cookie Parts

Adapted from Activity 76: Tree Cookies from *Project Learning Tree’s PreK-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide*.

WEST VIRGINIA TREE FACT

Twelve million of West Virginia’s 15.4 million acres are forested, making it the second most forested state in the country.

Do this word search puzzle to discover some components of a tree. Look below for the answers.

H	M	Z	E	S	B	M	I	L	T	F
G	E	C	F	D	T	C	A	K	L	B
E	T	A	M	I	L	C	N	X	A	I
S	H	M	R	G	R	U	E	R	U	S
A	G	B	P	T	R	E	K	S	N	G
E	U	I	H	T	W	O	R	G	N	N
S	O	U	P	H	L	O	E	M	A	I
I	R	M	S	A	P	W	O	O	D	R
D	D	X	Y	L	E	M	Z	D	W	R

Discover how PLT can help you teach... from nature!

- Attend a workshop near you to receive PLT activity guides, ideas, and materials
- Contact Cinda Francis, WV PLT Coordinator at cfrancis@wvadventures.net or toll-free (888) 372-9663.

Answers to word search: annual, bark, cambium, climate, disease, drought, fire, growth, heartwood, insects, limbs, phloem, rings, sapwood, trunk, xylem



Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is a program of the American Forest Foundation.