A Beginner's Guide

to

MINNESOTA TREES

BU-06593-S
Reviewed 2001

Want to Get to Know More Trees?

MORE species (more than 100), MORE illustrations, MORE complete identification keys, and MORE interesting information about trees is available in *Minnesota Trees*. Call the University of Minnesota Extension Service Distribution Center at (800) 876-8636 for price and availability. Ask for item BU-00486.

Cover: Two Norway pines (Minnesota's state tree) framed by a large eastern cottonwood

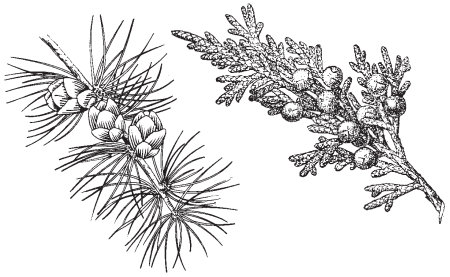
A Beginner's Guide to

MINNESOTA TREES

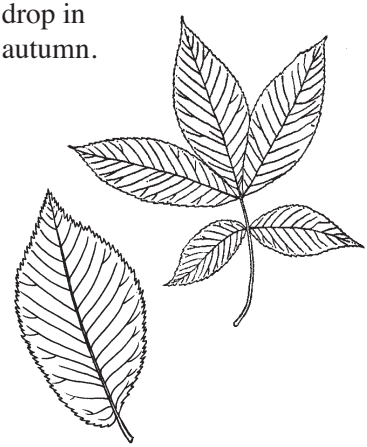
It's easy to learn to identify many of Minnesota's trees. All you need are some trees to examine and a desire to learn. This guide will introduce you to 35 trees commonly found in Minnesota.

Trees can be divided into two groups, **coniferous** and **deciduous.** To identify a tree, first decide in which of these two categories it belongs.

Coniferous trees bear their seeds in woody (rarely fleshy) cones and have very narrow or overlapping (like scales on a fish) leaves. All of our coniferous trees except eastern larch (or tamarack) are evergreen, meaning they maintain their leaves throughout the year.



Deciduous trees do not bear their seeds in cones. They have broad leaves that drop in autumn.

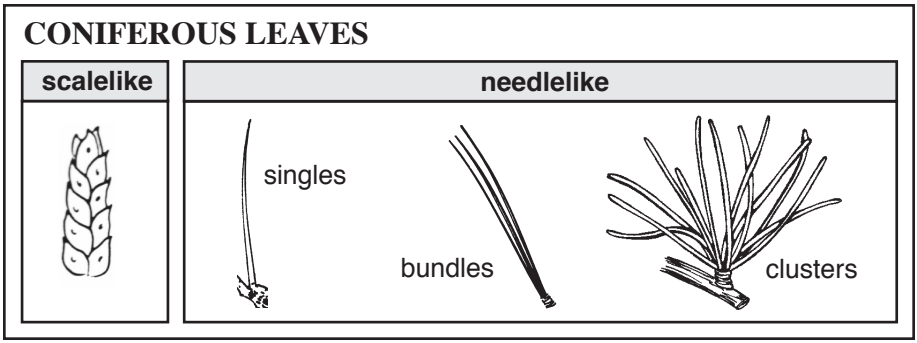


If the tree is coniferous, go to on page 2.

If the tree is deciduous, go to on page 5.

CONIFEROUS TREES

To identify **coniferous trees,** you need to understand the following distinctions:



If the leaves overlap like scales on a fish, go to  below.

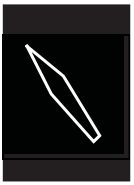
If the leaves are needlelike, go to  on page 3.

If some of the leaves have sharp points and the cones are fleshy and berrylike, the tree is an **eastern redcedar.**

If all of the leaves have dull tips and the cones are woody, the tree is a **northern white-cedar.**

Eastern Redcedar

Northern White-cedar



If the leaves are held together in bundles of 2 - 5, go to  below.

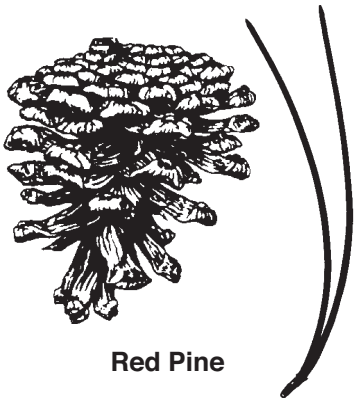
If the leaves occur in singles or clusters of 12 or more, go to  on page 4.

If the leaves are $2^1/_2$" - 5" long and held together in bundles of 5, the tree is an **eastern white pine.**

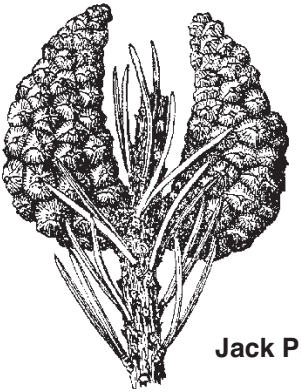
If the leaves are 4" - 6" long and held together in bundles of 2, the tree is a **red** (Norway) **pine.**

If the leaves are $^3/_4$" - $1^1/_2$" long and held together in bundles of 2, the tree is a **jack pine.**

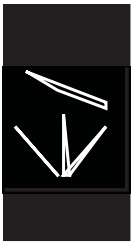
Eastern White Pine



Red Pine



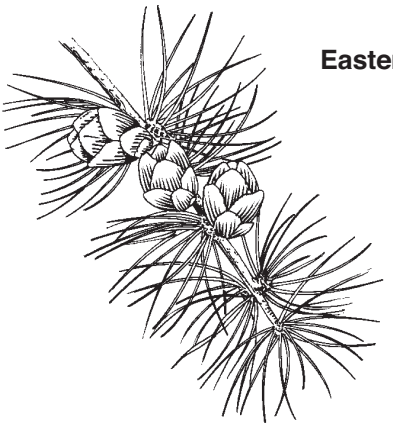
Jack Pine



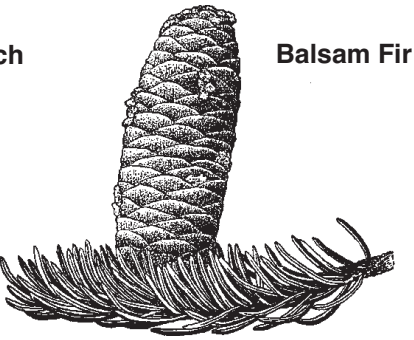
If the leaves are 3-sided and occur singly toward the end of the branch or in clusters of 12 or more, farther back on the branch, the tree is an **eastern larch** (tamarack).

If the leaves are flat, occur in singles, and have a pleasant smell when crushed, the tree is a **balsam fir.**

If the leaves are 4-sided and occur in singles, go to  below.



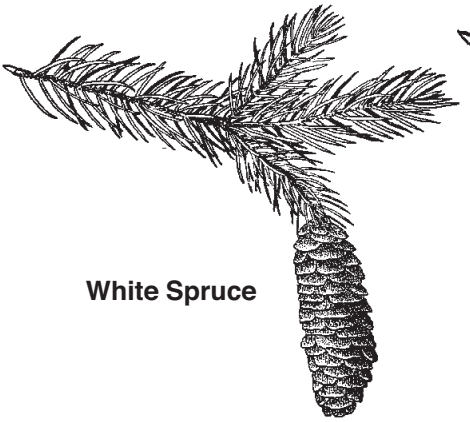
Eastern Larch



Balsam Fir

If the leaves are $^{1}/_{3}$" - $^{3}/_{4}$" long and have a stinky odor when crushed, and the twigs are hairless, the tree is a **white spruce.**

If the leaves are $^{1}/_{4}$" - $^{1}/_{2}$" long and have a mild odor when crushed, and the twigs have scattered red hairs, the tree is a **black spruce.**

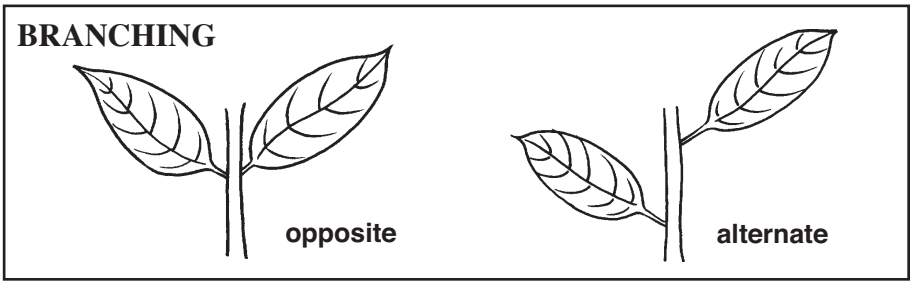


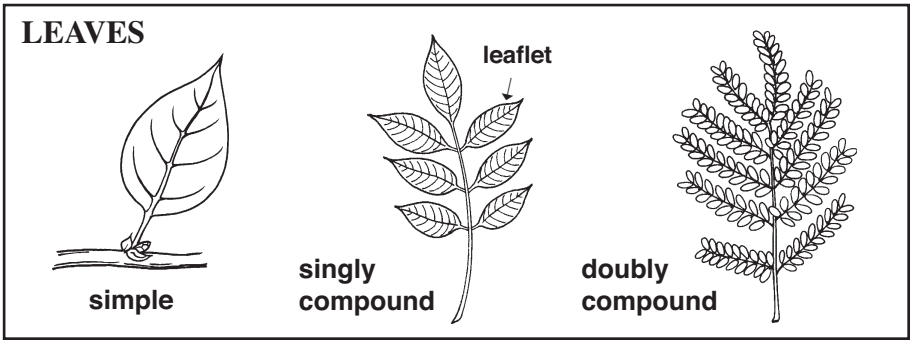
White Spruce

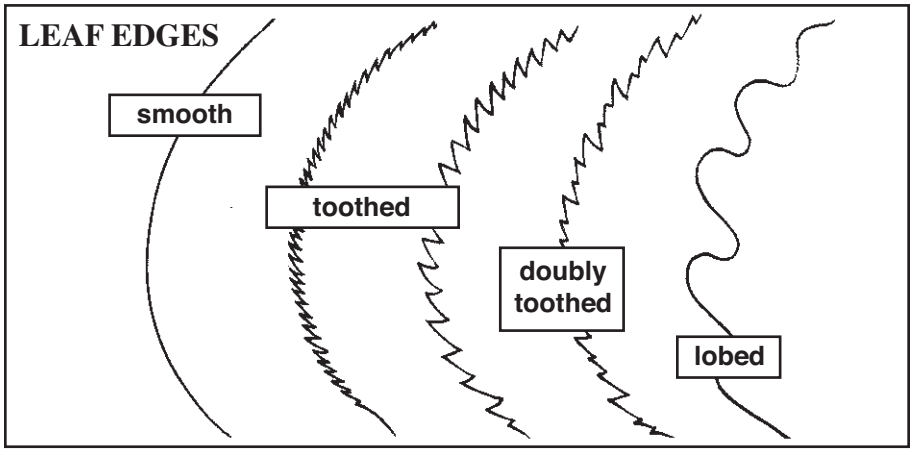
Black Spruce

DECIDUOUS TREES

To identify **deciduous trees**, you need to understand the following distinctions:







If the branches are opposite, go to on page 6.

If the branches are alternate, go to on page 7.

If the leaves are compound, go to  below.

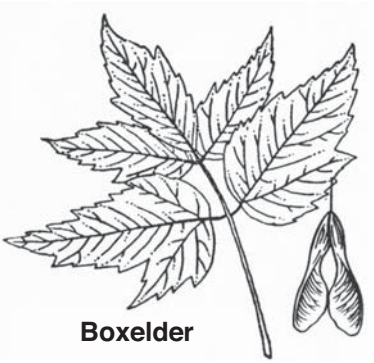
If the leaves are simple, go to  on page 7.

If there are 3 - 5 (occasionally 7) leaflets on the leaf and the twigs have a stinky smell when broken, the tree is a **boxelder.**

If there are 7 - 13 (occasionally 5) leaflets on the leaf and the twigs have a mild odor when broken, go to  below.

If there are 7 - 13 leaflets on the leaf and the side leaflets are flush with the leafstalk, the tree is a **black ash.**

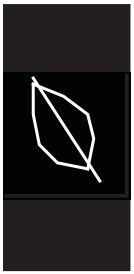
If there are 5 - 9 (usually 7) leaflets on the leaf, and the side leaflets are on a short stalk, the tree is a **green ash.**



Boxelder

Black Ash

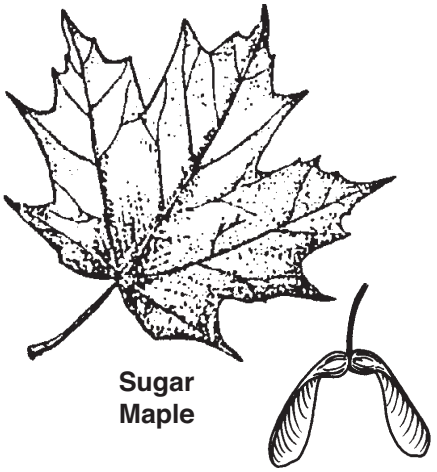
Green Ash



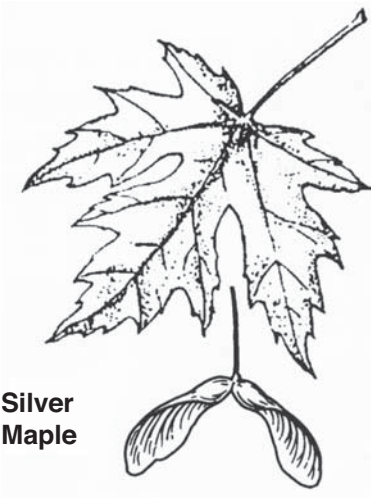
If the leaves are pale green below and have 5 lobes with smooth or wavy-pointed edges, the tree is a **sugar maple.**

If the leaves are silvery white below and have 5 (occasionally 3) deeply cut lobes with jagged edges, the tree is a **silver maple.**

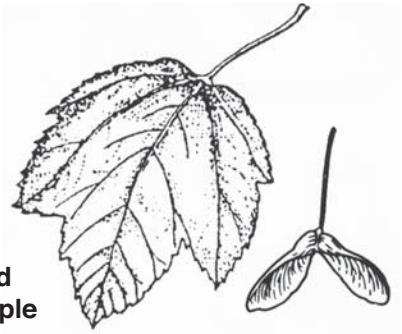
If the leaves are whitish green below and have 3 (occasionally 5) shallowly cut lobes with sharply toothed edges, the tree is a **red maple.**



Sugar Maple



Silver Maple



Red Maple

If the leaves are compound, go to  on page 8.

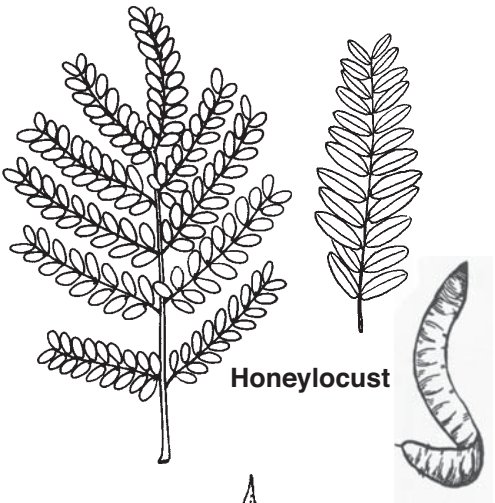
If the leaves are simple, go to  on page 9.

If the leaves are doubly compound near the branch tip and singly compound farther back on the branch, and the leaflet edges have very small teeth (nearly smooth), the tree is a **honeylocust.**

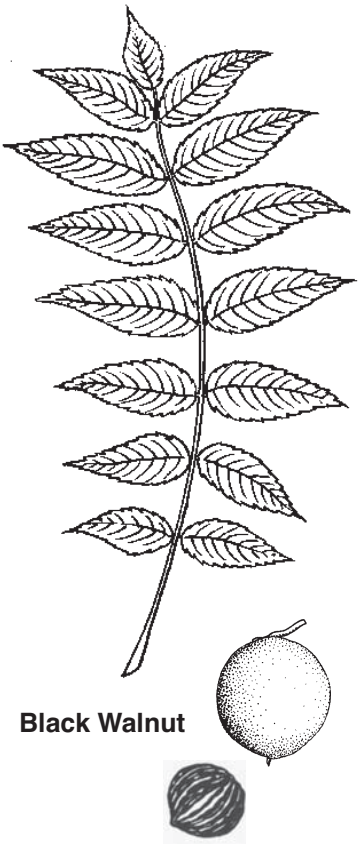
If all the leaves are singly compound and the leaflet edges have sharp teeth, go to  below.

If there are 14 - 23 leaflets on the leaf and the buds are cream colored, the tree is a **black walnut.**

If there are 7 - 11 leaflets on the leaf and the buds are bright yellow, the tree is a **bitternut hickory.**



Honeylocust



Black Walnut

Bitternut Hickory

If the leaves are lobed, go to  below.

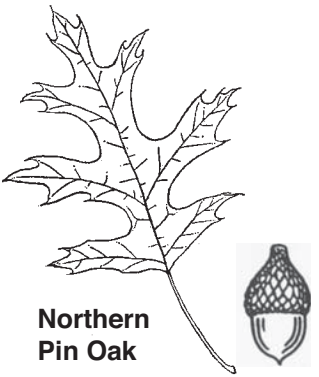
If the leaves are smooth or toothed but never lobed, go to  on page 10.

If the leaf lobes have pointed tips, go to  below.

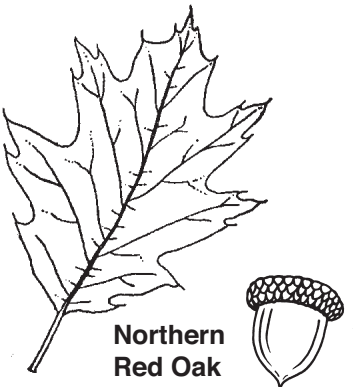
If the leaf lobes have rounded tips, go to  below.

If the lobes cut nearly to the middle of the leaf, the tree is a **northern pin oak.**

If the lobes cut only halfway to the middle of the leaf, the tree is a **northern red oak.**



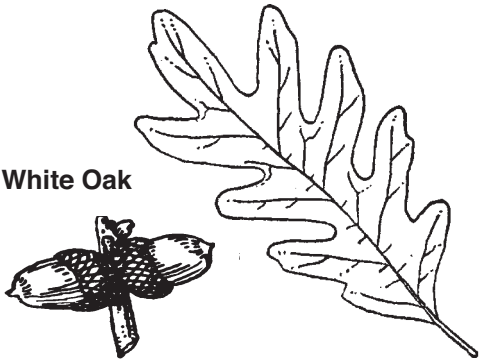
Northern Pin Oak



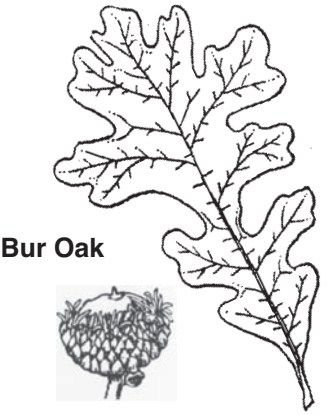
Northern Red Oak

If the lobes cut to nearly equal depths on the leaf, the tree is a **white oak.**

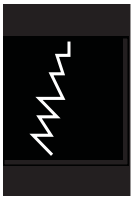
If the lobes cut to distinctly different depths on the leaf, the tree is a **bur oak.**



White Oak



Bur Oak



If the leaves have doubly toothed edges (both long and short teeth), go to  below.

If the leaves have singly toothed or smooth edges, go to  on page 12.

If the leaf base is distinctly uneven, go to  below.

If the leaf base is nearly even on both sides, go to  on page 11.

If the leaves are very rough above and below and the twigs are slimy when chewed, the tree is a **slippery elm.**

If the leaves are smooth or slightly rough above and smooth below and the twigs are dry when chewed, the tree is an **American elm.**

American Elm

Slippery Elm

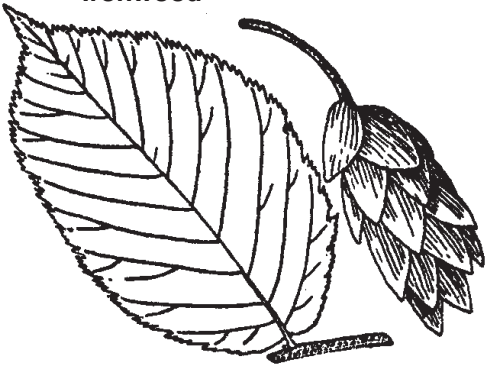
If the tree has papery bark that often peels in horizontal strips, go to  below.

If the tree has shreddy bark that often peels in vertical strips, tree is an **ironwood.**

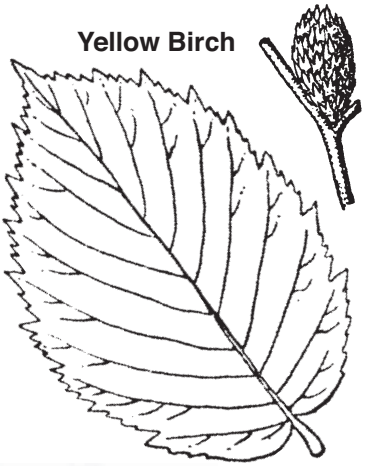
If the leaves or twigs have a wintergreen smell or taste when broken, and the trunk bark is bronze colored, the tree is a **yellow birch.**

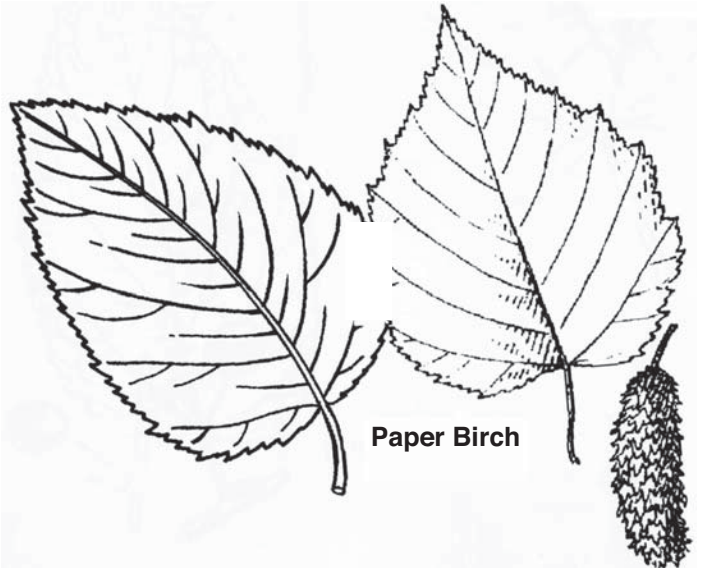
If the leaves or twigs do not have a wintergreen smell or taste and the trunk bark is white, the tree is a **paper birch.**

Ironwood



Yellow Birch





If the leaf base is distinctly uneven, go to  below.

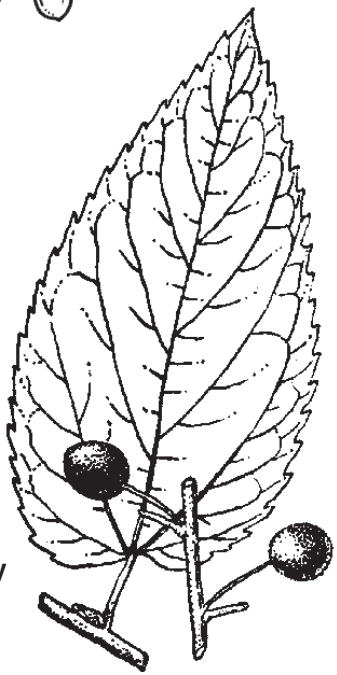
If the leaf base is nearly even on both sides, go to  on page 13.

If the leaves are $2^{1}/_{2}$" - 7" long and nearly as wide, the tree is an **American basswood.**

If the leaves are 2" - 5" long and about half as wide, the tree is a **hackberry.**

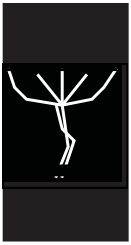
American Basswood

Hackberry



If the leafstalk is flattened near the leaf base, go to  below.

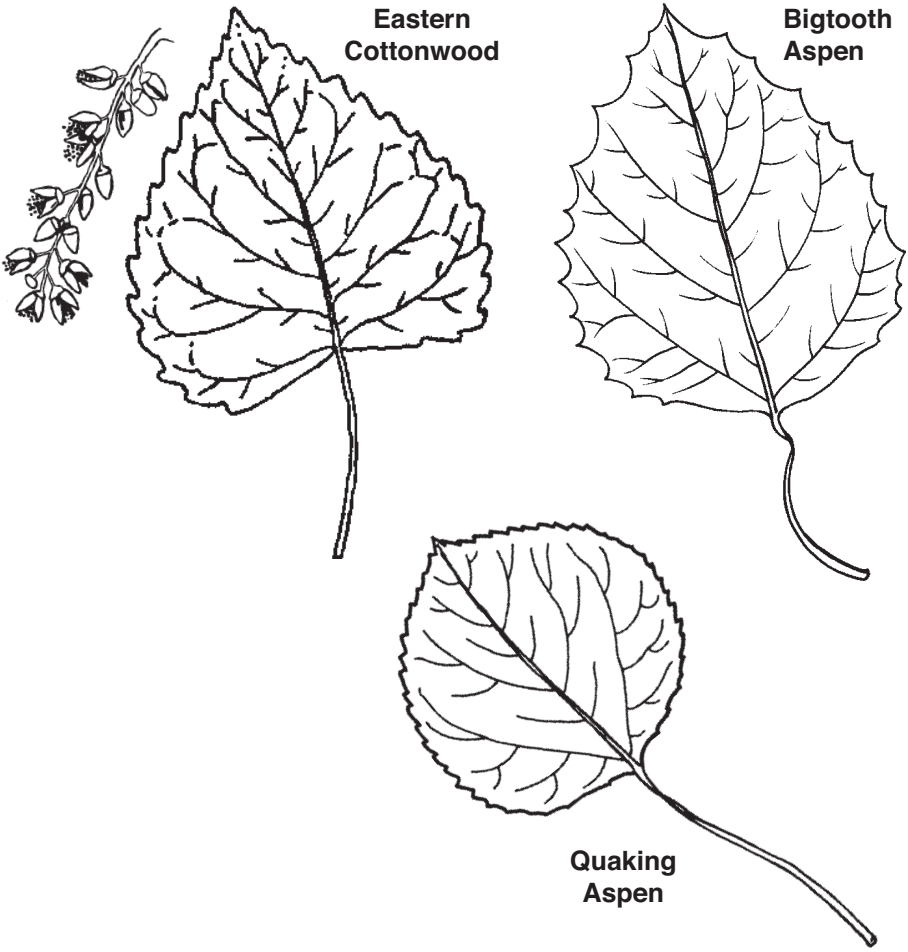
If the leafstalk is round, go to  on page 14.

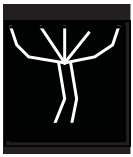


If the leaves are triangle shaped (nearly flat at the base) with large teeth on the edges, the tree is an **eastern cottonwood.**

If the leaves are round or egg-shaped with large teeth on the edges, the tree is a **bigtooth aspen.**

If the leaves are round or egg-shaped with small teeth on the edges, the tree is a **quaking aspen.**



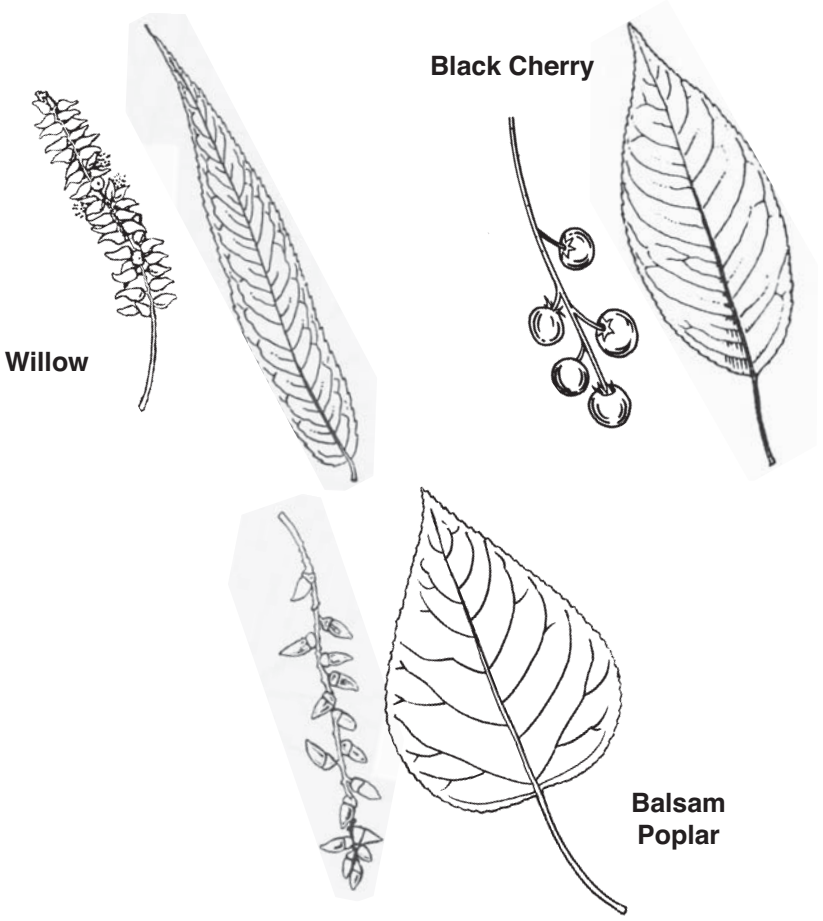


If the leaves are more than 4 times as long as wide, the tree is a **willow.**

If the leaves are less than 4 times as long as wide, go to below.

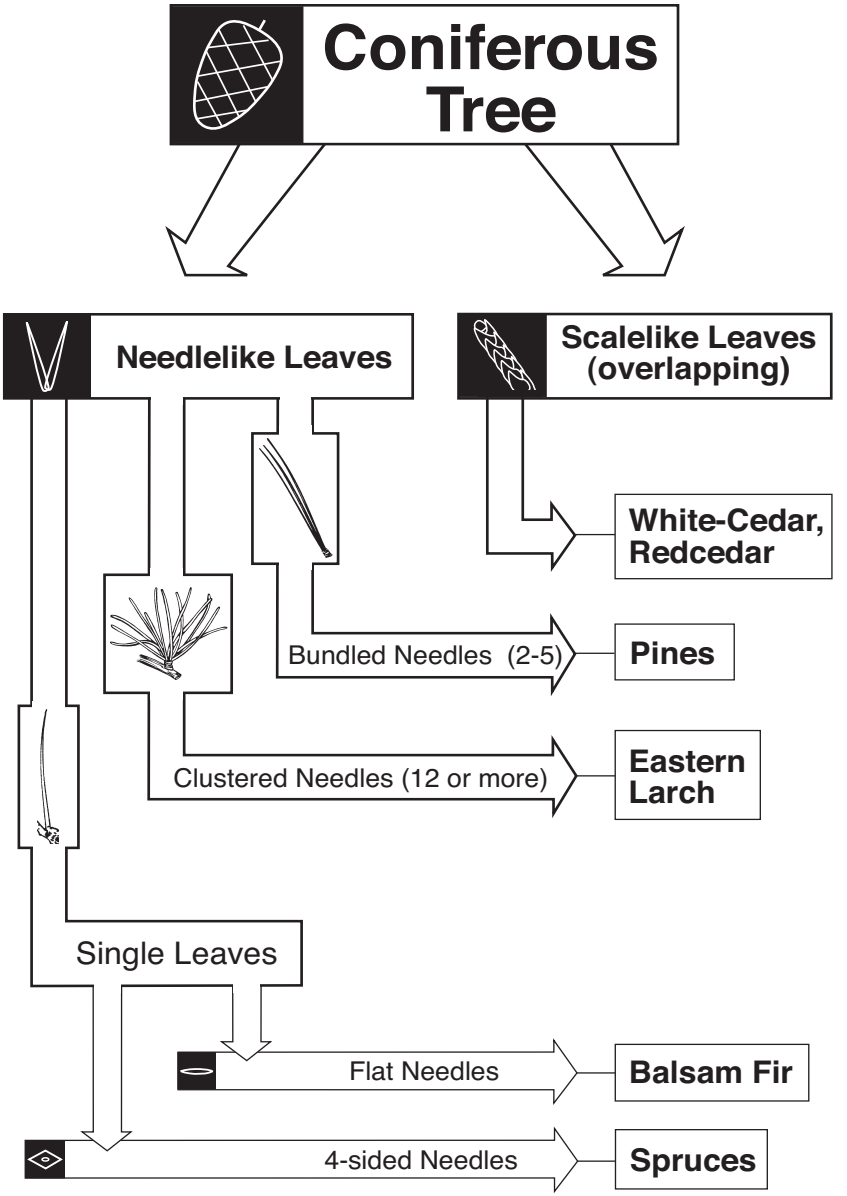
If the leaves have small pointed teeth on the edges and are pale green below with white or brown hairs on the veins, and the twigs have a bitter almond smell when broken, the tree is a **black cherry.**

If the leaves have small, rounded teeth on the edges and are silvery green below with rusty blotches, and the buds are sticky, the tree is a **balsam poplar.**



SHORTCUT GUIDE TO MINNESOTA TREES

Read the signs and follow the arrows to find your tree



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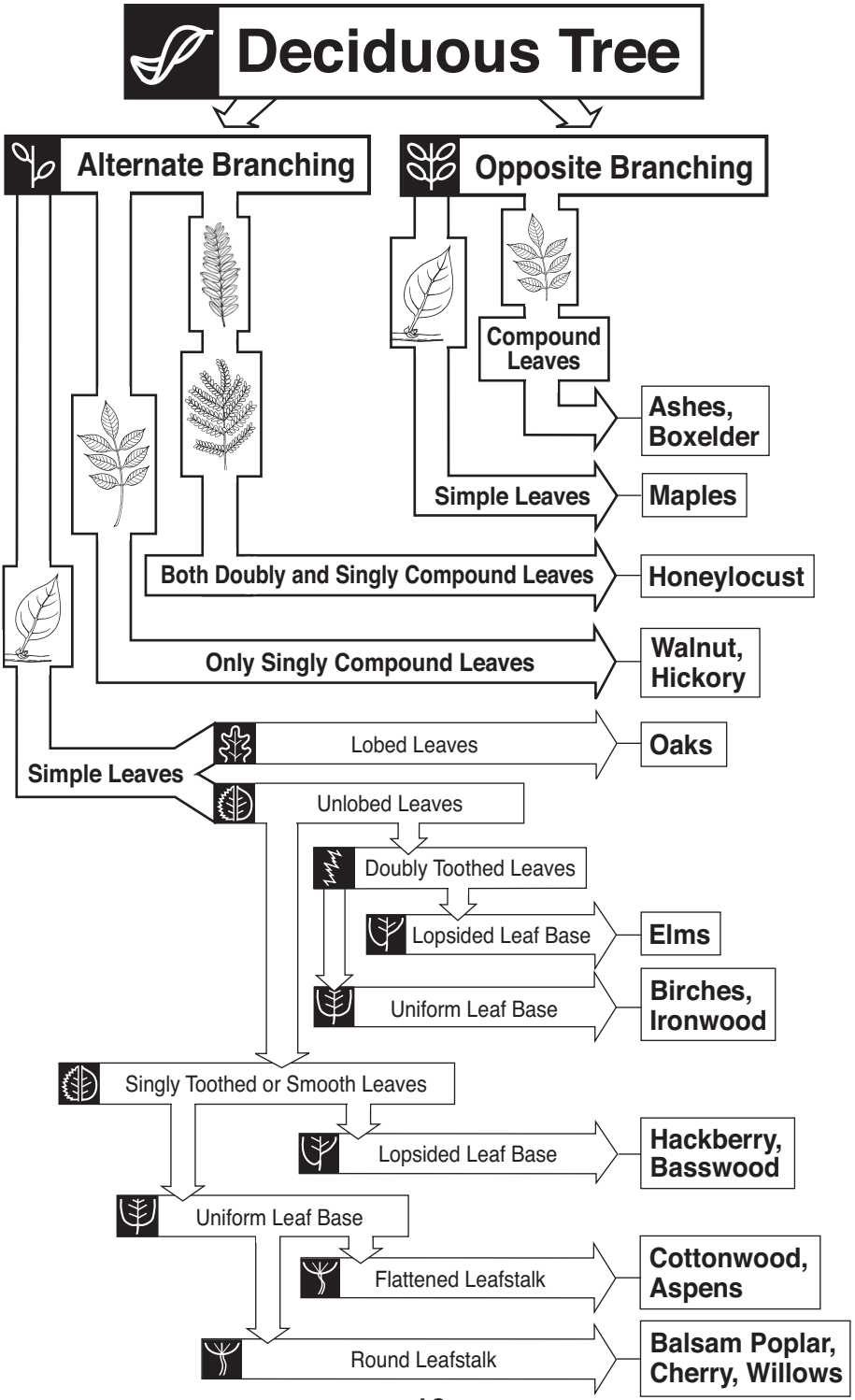
Deciduous Tree
Alternate Branching
Opposite Branching
Compound Leaves
Ashes, Boxelder
Simple Leaves
Maples
Both Doubly and Singly Compound Leaves
Honeylocust
Only Singly Compound Leaves
Walnut, Hickory
Simple Leaves
Lobed Leaves
Oaks
Unlobed Leaves
Doubly Toothed Leaves
Lopsided Leaf Base
Elms
Uniform Leaf Base
Birches, Ironwood
Singly Toothed or Smooth Leaves
Lopsided Leaf Base
Hackberry, Basswood
Uniform Leaf Base
Flattened Leafstalk
Cottonwood, Aspens
Round Leafstalk
Balsam Poplar, Cherry, Willows

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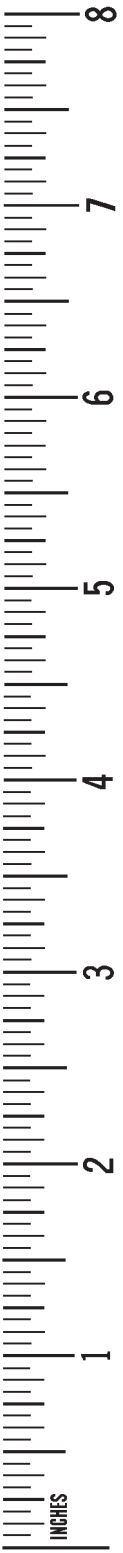

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