Know where you live

Skills to get to know 20 common tree species

... and then some
1. Basic structure  
   a. Leaf is compound - - - - - - - - Hickory  
   b. Leaf is simple - - - - - - - - - go to 2  
2. Edge  
   a. Edge is lobed - - - - - - - - - go to 3  
   b. Edge is entire - - - - - - - - - go to 4  
3. Veins  
   a. Palmate veins - - - - - - - - Maple  
   b. Pinnate veins - - - - - - - - Oak  
4. Margin  
   a. Margin is smooth - - - - - - - - - a whole branch of those maddeningly oval leaves = MOL  
      (maybe an Osage Orange or just some generic leaves that an artist drew without really knowing)  
      a. Margin is wavy - - - - - - - - - go to 5  
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   a. Fan shaped, including the veins - - - Gingko
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Pinnate (most) Vein patterns Palmate

like the vanes of a feather.

Parallel ... super uncommon among trees
Truly distinctive features that leave no doubt about the ID

Aspen - Won’t spin

They have a flattened petiole, which catches the wind like the blades of a wind chime.

Oh, and weakly veined

Sandpaper texture = Elm

Also, asymmetrical base … aka diagonal across the petiole
Asymmetrical across the base of the petiole? …

Witchhazel … they’re blooming right now, too!

Or the leaf of a tree that had a hard time growing … truly, you need to look at several leaves on each tree to know which is “classic” or that represents the general shape of most leaves that you’d find on that tree.
More distinctive

Acorns? = Oak

Wings (samara) = Maple

Another asymmetrical base?

= Basswood (aka Linden)

(note, the edge is toothed)
Distinctive shapes

Redbud is heart-shaped, but No teeth and symmetrical

Hawthorne have thorns … so do Black Locust

Oooh, and Black Locust has tons of small oval leaflets, btw, Honey Locust has many times more tiny long leaflets
Speaking of distinctive ...

Honey Locust - it’s bipinnate -
a twice-cut compound leaf

How about Sassafras?!
Ghost, Mitten, or MOL!!
Even more distinctive - this one has opposite branching

All you really need is to spot that fruit!
Red Maple, common
Striped Maple, “goosefoot”
Mountain Maple at higher elevations
Silver Maple, Japanese Maple, Freeman Maple

The undersides look silvery when blowing in the wind

A hybrid cross between Red and Silver Maples
How about the bark?

Beech is smooth, so is Striped Maple aka Goosefoot Maple.

The bark peels on Shagbark Hickory and Paper Birch and a really old Maple.
River Birch bark reddish/golden

Musclewood, aka Bluebeech bark like an athlete’s limb
Birch leaves ... toothed, with strong veins

Ooh, and Black and Yellow Birch bark are scratch-&-sniff sensations!

Does it smell like Wintergreen or Root beer to you?
Strongly veined also include Oaks and Chestnut and Beech
Talk about distinctive … and quite the history, too

Used to be more common than oaks, but an introduced fungus kills off the trees, once their trunks reach dbh 4”+

The leaf is almost canoe-shaped, a solid 8-12 inches, with a super-short petiole (round, it spins)

Now we just find tiny whips around a dead snag, never reaching more than 15 feet before they die
How about fruits?

Little Leaf Linden

White Ash

Kousa Dogwood

Maple
Black Cherry (native) added bonuses for IDing ...

Oh, and fruit … cherries!

Fuzz, on the underside, along the mid-rib
Weakly veined: fruits and other MOL’s

Flip it over to see weakly netted veins, they taper at the tip … classic for a fruit

Apple: lots of tiny teeth, with a tapered tip that twists
More MOL’s

Magnolia - weakly veined, shiny, smooth margin

Plum and Pear

Alder - strongly veined, distinctive fruit
I’ve always called this a pear, Trinity Pear?

Notice that those are not just teeth, but appear to be bristles
Around the other Schools:

CHCS
- Black Walnut
- Norway Maples with maroon leaves (looks like Sugar Maple)
- Amelanchier
- Little Leaf Linden

JBMS
- Tuliptree
- Japanese Maple

SRE
- Honey Locust
- Bradford Pear
- Chinese Chestnut
- Freeman Maple
Am. Beech and Horse Chestnut
Tuliptree - two different leaf shapes

Northern Catalpa - no teeth
Compare Sugar Maple and Sycamore
Sycamore
American Beech

Check out the teeth at the end of each vein

Copper Beech

You don’t see a tooth at the end of each vein, and the leaves turn coppery-red in the fall
Still working on the ID of this one

Leaf has rounded teeth

… Ack!! I forgot to look at the branching!!

(I’ll have to send my dh out to check for me, since it’s on the path right next to where he works

Will the bark help?
Phew!

I took a pic of the tree, looking up the trunk, looks like the branching is alternate