

Hello Trees Resource Sheet



What to look for outdoors in Summer

Tree identification: beech



'Pupils should be taught to **identify and name** a variety of common wild and garden plants, including **deciduous and evergreen trees**.'

The National Curriculum Year 1 Science programme of study, Plants, Statutory requirements



So we had better get on with it!



Anyway, Summer is a brilliant time to get to grips with tree identification. Can you think why?



Remember, there are 6 clues to tree identification: far too many for all at once. In winter, we shall look 3 clues to tree identity: bark, branching and buds.

In Spring, Summer and Autumn, we focus on 3 other clues. They all have an 'f' sound:

- Leaf
- Flower
- Fruit



Put up the 3 middle fingers of your left (also an 'f' sound) hand – rather like the Scout and Guide Associations' salute - your middle finger, your biggest finger, reminds you of the most obvious clue to the tree's identity, the **leaf**; then the fingers on either side are the **flower** and the **fruit**.

In summer, the flowers are gone but the **leaves** and **fruit** are there and they are good clues:

- they are there for many months,
- they are obvious,
- they are distinctive.



So there we have the answer to our query as to why Summer is a brilliant time to get to grips with tree identification?'



What words would you use to describe the leaves: their colour, size, shape ...?

Here is a photograph of a group of beech leaves next to the outline of a 5-year-old's hand.



Would you agree that each leaf

- is dark green,
- is shiny,
- is much smaller than the hand,
- is egg-shaped ('ovoid'),
- has a point at its tip,
- has a short petiole?

Anything else?

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Look for a beech tree in a park or churchyard.

Here is a photograph of one in a park.

It has the characteristic shape of a beech tree. Look for a tree with a similar shape.



I know we are only supposed to be considering leaves and fruit right now, but remember that tree shape – or 'branching' – is one of our 6 clues to tree identification.



How would you describe the shape?



I would say that mine is bell-shaped. Is yours?

Bell-Beech that's easy to remember!



A mature beech tree



Leaves of a copper beech tree



Some beech trees have the same shape but purple leaves. These trees are called 'copper beech' trees.

In Spring, when they first come out, the leaves are a copper colour but they go purple. Have you found a copper beech?



Are all the leaves on your copper beech purple?

Some of mine are green, some are part purple and part green. And underneath, they are completely green! I think the more sun they get, the more purple they are.

Is that how it is on your copper beech tree?



Fruit is our other Big Clue to a tree's identity in summer - and autumn.



What do you think beech tree fruits look like?

Will they be hard or soft? Big or small? Smooth or rough? And what colour?



Clue: they are called 'beech nuts'.



Yes, they are hard, small, rough and brown.



Can you see any beech nuts on your tree?



Beech nuts: outer cases and inner seeds



For much more about beech trees, see Hello Trees book 'Bella Beech' to be found at the Hello Trees website – where there are lots of fun things to look for and do outdoors.