




INTO THE WOODS



RATIONALE FOR ADVENTURE

In this adventure, Scouts will learn to identify plants and trees and how they differ in locations around the world. They will gain knowledge about ecosystems and the importance of conserving our natural resources.

TAKEAWAYS FOR CUB SCOUTS

- Understanding our interconnection with the plant world
- Being knowledgeable, responsible, and comfortable in the outdoors
- A Scout is reverent. 

Webelos Handbook, page 448

ADVENTURE REQUIREMENTS

Do all of these:

1. Identify two different groups of trees and the parts of a tree.
2. Identify six trees common to the area where you live. Tell whether they are native to your area. Tell how both wildlife and humans use them.
3. Identify six plants common to the area where you live. Tell which animals use them and for what purpose.
4. Visit a nature center, nursery, tree farm, or park, and speak with someone knowledgeable about trees and plants that are native to your area. Explain how plants and trees are important to our ecosystem and how they improve our environment.
5. Develop a plan to care for and then plant at least one plant or tree, either indoors in a pot or outdoors. Tell how this plant or tree helps the environment in which it is planted and what the plant or tree will be used for.
6. Make a list of items in your home that are made from wood and share it with your den. Or with your den, take a walk and identify useful things made from wood.
7. Explain how the growth rings of a tree trunk tell its life story. Describe different types of tree bark and explain what the bark does for the tree.

NOTES TO DEN LEADER

Meeting 3 will be a den outing to visit a nature center, nursery, tree farm, or park (requirement 4). In advance of the outing, the leader will need to make arrangements with the outing location and confirm the outing plan with families, including transportation and any additional items they need to bring. Make sure a tour and activity plan has been submitted, if required, and activity consent forms are distributed, signed, and collected.

Note also that part of Meeting 1 will be a hike to complete requirements 2 and 3 by identifying trees and plants in the area. If the location is beyond your regular meeting site, you must submit a tour and activity plan, if required, for this hike.

See the Appendix for optional den meeting activities, including openings, gatherings, and closings.

MEETING 1 PLAN

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS NEEDED

- U.S. and den flags
- For Gathering activity: a stethoscope for listening to a tree OR materials for the “What Kind of Leaf Am I?” game: paper, pencils, nontransparent bags, tree and plant identification book

- Items for making bark rubbings during the Nature Hike (Activity 1): crayons, masking tape, rice paper or other thin paper

GATHERING

Scouts may do one or both of these activities while waiting for everyone to arrive:

Listen to a Tree

- Find a deciduous tree in your area at least 6 inches in diameter with thin bark. Have Scouts stand near the tree and listen to the leaves and branches moving in the wind.
- A tree is a living, growing thing. It eats, rests, and has circulation just as we do, as water comes in through the roots, moves through the trunk, and then goes out the leaves. The “heartbeat” of a tree—that is, the water and sap moving through it—is a wonderful sound. The best time to hear that heartbeat is in early spring when the tree sends the first sap upward to its branches, preparing them for another season of growth.
- Some species of trees have a louder heartbeat than others. Help the Scouts to press the stethoscope firmly against the tree, keeping it motionless so they won’t hear any interfering noises. They may need to try several different places on the tree trunk before they find a good listening spot.

“What Kind of Leaf Am I?”

- On a table, set out pencils, paper, and samples of leaves from the three basic tree types listed below. Place each sample in its own bag labeled only 1, 2, or 3. A Scout will reach into each bag and try to identify the type of leaf he feels without looking at it. On a sheet of paper, have him draw and identify the leaf as he imagines it. (The samples may be real, plastic, or silk artificial leaves. Replicas may also be cut from felt to the correct shape.)

Conifers. These trees can be either deciduous (loses its leaves in autumn) or evergreen (has leaves all year long)—but most of them are evergreen. Conifer leaves are narrow and sharply pointed (e.g., pines, firs, juniper).

Broad-Leaved. This means having relatively broad rather than needle-like or scale-like leaves. The leaves on all broad-leaved trees are arranged in one of two ways: opposite or alternate. Examples include oak, elm, and eucalyptus trees.

Palms. These trees (e.g., palmetto, Washingtonia, California fan) have divided leaves that grow from a single stem with no branches. The trees do not increase in girth with age. Though considered part of the broad-leaf family, palms are technically not considered true trees because they have no wood in their trunks.

OPENING

- Conduct a flag ceremony of your choosing that includes the Pledge of Allegiance and, as appropriate, the Scout Oath and Scout Law.
- Lead the den in singing “This Land is Your Land.”

TALK TIME

- Carry out business items for the den.
- Allow time for sharing among Webelos Scouts.
- Explain that the den will be going “Into the Woods” this month, experiencing the life of trees and plants, and how they help us.
- If Scouts played the “What Kind of Leaf Am I?” game, review the tree types. Tell Scouts that the game helped them complete half of requirement 1 as they identified different types of trees by feeling the leaves.
- If Scouts did the “Listen to a Tree” activity, tell them that now they know for sure that a tree is a living thing. Ask them what they think they heard. Explain that this demonstrates the parts of a tree and how water and minerals move from the roots and through the trunk toward the crown.

ACTIVITIES

◆ Activity 1: Nature Hike (Requirements 1, 2, and 3)

- Take Webelos Scouts on a walk through the neighborhood, a large backyard, or a nearby park to observe trees.

- Begin your hike by asking the boys to smell the trees and plants. (Some have very distinctive odors, especially pines and eucalyptus.)
- Bring pencil and paper to make bark rubbings. Have Scouts determine which type of leaves each tree has, and see if they can identify the different parts of each tree. Bring a tree and plant book as well, so the boys can take turns looking through it as they make their identifications. If there is any confusion, help them come to a consensus about each tree and plant.
- Have Scouts call out when they see something made from wood. How many different things can they find?
- Before returning to the meeting place, record how many trees and plants the Scouts identified that are common to your area. Make sure you discuss how both wildlife and humans use those trees and plants.

CLOSING

- Gather the den together and recite the Outdoor Code.



Do-at-Home Project Reminder:

Each Scout will complete requirement 6 before the next meeting—listing useful items in his home that are made from wood so he can share what he finds with the den.

AFTER THE MEETING

- Serve refreshments, if desired.
- Work together to clean up the meeting place.
- Record completion of requirements 1, 2, and 3.

MEETING 1 RESOURCES

ACTIVITIES

◆ Activity 1: Nature Hike (Requirements 1, 2, and 3)

Bark Rubbings

- At each tree, allow Webelos Scouts to make a bark rubbing by taping a sheet of paper to the trunk and rubbing a crayon over the paper to copy the texture. Different types of trees have very different bark—thick and deeply furrowed, smooth with pock marks, etc.
- Make sure the Scouts identify other characteristics of each tree, such as leaves, fruit, nuts, height, and girth. Together, these things will help them to identify the tree. Tell them: *To positively identify each tree, you have to narrow the possibilities.*
- This activity will give each boy the tools to identify many trees wherever he goes. He may want to create his own identification booklet by putting leaf and bark rubbings from a different tree on each page with the name of the tree written below the rubbings. The den members could use these booklets on their next hike!
- Another option is for Scouts to photograph the leaves and bark of each tree with a camera or smartphone, and print those photos to make their booklets.

MEETING 2 PLAN

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS NEEDED

- U.S. and den flags
- Items for Gathering activity: pens or pencils, slice of a tree stump, strips of paper, and nails, pins,

or thumbtacks. Tree “cookies,” or slices, can be purchased from a number of online retailers or might be donated by a lumberyard or town dump.

- Paper or cardboard tree leaves for the Opening—one per Scout, each with a phrase from the Scout Oath written on it (e.g., “On my honor,” “duty to God,” “and to obey the Scout Law”)
- Items for planting a tree or plant: seedlings, water, mulch, and a pot (if needed). Your local nursery or home improvement center might help you to choose the right plants or seedlings (infant trees). The Arbor Foundation is also an excellent source for seedlings.

GATHERING

As Scouts arrive, have them play History Stump (from the *Cub Scout Leader How-To Book*):

- Have a large slice of a tree trunk that shows the rings (sanding the slice can help bring the rings out).
- Count the rings and calculate what year each ring represents. Boys write down important events and the date they happened on small strips of paper. Attach them to the corresponding rings on the stump with pins or small nails.
- You might like to mark the boys’ birthdays or some dates from Scouting’s history or the history of your pack along with other historical events.

OPENING

- Conduct a flag ceremony of your choosing that includes the Pledge of Allegiance and, as appropriate, the Scout Oath and Scout Law.
- Provide each Webelos Scout with a paper or cardboard tree leaf on which is written a portion of the Scout Oath (if the den is large, you may need to limit each phrase to only a few words). Begin the meeting with each boy reading his portion of the Oath in the proper sequence.
- When finished, have each boy put the leaf in his pocket. He must carry it with him until he has done one of his responsibilities under the Oath during the coming week.

TALK TIME (REQUIREMENTS 6 AND 7)

- Carry out business items for the den.
- Allow time for sharing among Webelos Scouts.
- Discuss how all the elements they see in a tree cutting (outer and inner bark, cambium, sapwood, heartwood, thinning, and fire scars) tell part of the tree’s life story. (See the *Webelos Handbook* for diagram.)
- Discuss what bark does for a tree and the different types of bark the Scouts found when they made their rubbings.
- Have each Scout report on the useful items he found in his home that come from wood.
- Talk about or demonstrate the proper way to plant a tree or plant (see the *Webelos Handbook*).

ACTIVITIES

◆ Activity 1: Planting (Requirement 5)

- Have Scouts work together to start a tree or a plant, either outdoors or indoors in a pot. (See the *Webelos Handbook* for directions.)
- After the planting is done, discuss how the plant or tree will help the environment and what it may be used for.
- A Scout may also want to plant a tree on his own at home. This will help him to understand his connection to the natural world. Planting new trees is the key to sustainable forestry, which could allow people in the future to have the same abundant forests that we enjoy today.

◆ Activity 2: Squirrel in a Tree

- Start this game by lining up the Scouts and giving each one a number: 1, 2, or 3.
- Scouts with numbers 1 and 2 will team up to form “hollow trees” by holding hands, facing each other. Scouts with number 3 become the squirrels. (Be sure there are fewer trees than squirrels. Increase

the number of squirrels if necessary.)

- When the leader calls out, “Squirrel in the tree!” the “trees” will hold their arms high so a “squirrel” can go under them. Once a squirrel is standing inside, the trees lower their arms so no other squirrel can enter.
- When the leader calls out, “Squirrels out of the tree!” the trees hold up their arms again, and each squirrel must go to a different tree. This gives any “homeless” squirrel a chance to claim a tree. If the squirrel reaches it in time, he gets to be part of the tree—and one of the tree Scouts becomes a squirrel.

CLOSING

- Gather the den and have the Scouts name some of the roles trees serve in the world. These might include:
 - Food for insects and animals
 - Food for us
 - Shelter for insects and animals
 - Shelter for us (in the form of lumber for homes)
 - Furnishings for our homes (beds, chairs, tables, etc.)
 - Keeping us cool in the summer by giving shade
 - Keeping us warm in the winter by guarding us from the wind
 - Helping to filter the air and remove pollutants and dust
 - Adding oxygen to the air, without which none of us could survive
 - Providing fuel for our campfires and fireplaces
 - Providing beauty
 - Protecting the soil from erosion
- Keep track of how many things the Scouts name. When they reach the 12th one, mention that there are also 12 points of the Scout Law. The Law is how we as Scouts serve in the world. Finish by reciting the Law together.
- Ask the boys to be creative and think during the next several days about which benefits of trees might relate directly to points of the Scout Law (e.g., *helpful* for all the reasons listed above). They can follow up next week by discussing any connections they made.
- Review details for the upcoming outing in Meeting 3. Make sure all Scouts and their families know the plans.

AFTER THE MEETING

- Serve refreshments, if desired.
- Work together to clean up the meeting place.
- Record completion of requirements 5, 6, and 7.
- Have Scouts sign thank-you notes for those who will help with the outing.

MEETING 3 PLAN (Den Outing)

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS NEEDED

- Contact the outing location at least a month in advance to schedule the visit. Give the staff a copy of the requirements so they can see what the Scouts are doing in this adventure and possibly plan a hands-on activity.
- If a tour guide won't be available on-site, arrange for an expert on ecosystems to accompany you so he or she can show Scouts some of the trees and plants that are native to the area and talk about the importance of ecosystems.

- Confirm that a tour and activity plan has been submitted, if required, and that transportation to and from the location is in place. Secure signed activity consent forms.
- Unit den leader should have in possession (if required by local council practices) the tour and activity plan and a copy of the *Guide to Safe Scouting*.
- Review any questions the Scouts want to ask to ensure all are appropriate. To avoid forgetting, have them carry the questions on index cards.
- Remind Scouts of any gear they need to bring, especially if the den is going to a nature center or other outdoor location.
- Bring the signed thank-you notes for those who help.

GATHERING

- Together as a den, recite the Leave No Trace Principles for Kids and ask the Scouts how they relate to the outing location.

OPENING

- Conduct a flag ceremony of your choosing that includes the Pledge of Allegiance and, as appropriate, the Scout Oath and Scout Law.

TALK TIME

- Carry out business items for the den.
- Allow time for sharing among Webelos Scouts.
- As Scouts arrive, ask them what connections they thought of between the benefits of trees and points of the Scout Law. (One answer might be that trees allow us to be *thrifty* because wood products are recyclable.)

ACTIVITIES

◆ Activity 1: Visit or Tour (Requirement 4)

- If a tour guide or host will be leading you through the nature center, nursery, tree farm, or park, introduce this person and mention that the Scouts have questions they would like to ask during or after the visit.
- When the visit ends, be sure the Scouts show appreciation and give their thank-you notes to everyone who helped.

CLOSING

- Gather the den together and have each Scout share something he enjoyed learning during the outing or the rest of the adventure.

AFTER THE MEETING

- Serve refreshments, if desired and appropriate.
- If possible, work together to leave the location cleaner than you found it.
- Record completion of requirement 4.

Upon completion of the Into the Woods adventure, your Webelos Scouts will have earned the adventure pin shown here. Make sure they are recognized for their completion by presenting the adventure pins, to be worn on their uniforms, as soon as possible according to your pack's tradition.

