

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.

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.”

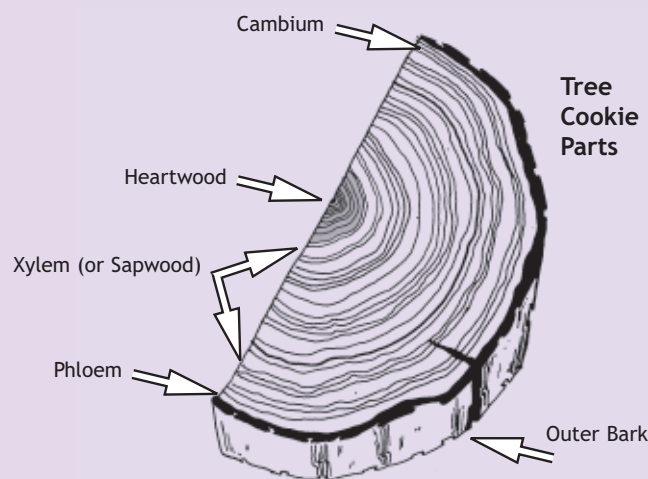
Doing the Activity

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.



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

Do this word search puzzle to discover some components of a branch. 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

www.plt.org

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

- Attend, host, or sponsor a local PLT workshop where participants receive PLT activity guides, ideas, and materials.
- Contact your PLT State Coordinator. Visit www.plt.org or call 202-463-2475 for their contact information.

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.