

OBSERVING TREES

*What observations can we make about the trees around us?
An at-home activity provided by the Hopkins Memorial Forest*

OVERVIEW

Much of Massachusetts is forested, and even in cities, trees can be found along streets and in parks – trees are all around us! In this activity, you will take a closer look at a singular tree, and learn what makes different species of trees unique.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- This sheet
- A tree
- A clipboard
- A sharpened pencil
- Optional: colored pencils

PROCEDURE

1. Go outside and take a look around. What's the weather like today? Is it windy or still? Is it cold or warm?

2. Locate a tree and write down some general observations about it: what is the shape of the trunk? Is it taller or shorter than the other trees around it? Sketch the tree in the box provided – feel free to add color!



3. Leaves: **Deciduous trees** have broad leaves that change color in the fall and spread their seeds using flowers, whereas **coniferous trees** have needles instead of leaves, don't change color in the fall, and they use cones instead of flowers to spread their seeds. Is your tree **coniferous** or **deciduous**? (circle one)

Coniferous

Deciduous

(has needles)

(has broad leaves)

Describe the needles/leaves on your tree: what color are they? How large/long are they? How many needles grow together out of a branch? Are the needles/leaves flat or rounded?

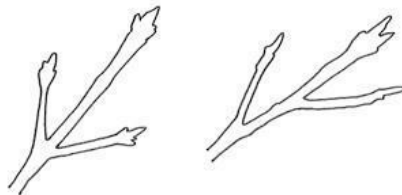
Draw a leaf or group of needles below:



4. Branching pattern: **Opposite branching** refers to a branching pattern where branches, twigs, and leaves grow from the trunk and branches directly across from each other. **Alternate branching** refers to a pattern where branches, twigs, and leaves do not grow directly across from each other. Take a look at the branching pattern of your tree: does your tree have **opposite** or **alternate** branching? (circle one)

Opposite

Alternate



5. Bark: describe the bark of your tree. What color is it? Is it smooth or does it have ridges? If it has ridges, how deep are the **furrows** (spaces between the ridges)? Do the ridges cross each other? If it has smooth bark, is it peeling? Write down any observations regarding the bark, including other aspects of the trunk, such as holes, markings, or other plants.

Sketch a section of the bark below:



5. Extra credit: using your new observation skills and one of the tree guides on the Hopkins Memorial Forest website, identify the species of your tree!
