

What Is a Tree?

A tree is any woody plant that can reach a height of 15 feet or more at maturity and that usually is single-stemmed and has a crown, or branched-out area at the top. That distinguishes trees from shrubs, which are woody but short and multi-stemmed, and from vines, which may be long and woody but lack a crown.

Minnesota's Own

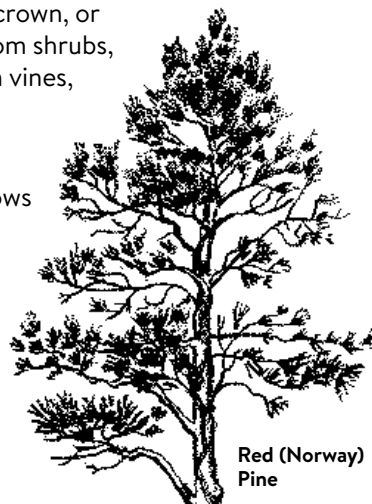
Minnesota is home to 52 species of trees. This poster shows 35 of these "natives." Not shown are hemlock, American mountain ash, northern mountain ash, river birch, pin cherry, Kentucky coffeetree, rock elm, slippery elm (red elm), eastern hophornbeam (ironwood), American hornbeam (blue beech), black maple, mountain maple, red mulberry, black oak, chinkapin oak, northern pin oak, and swamp white oak.

Down to Basics

All of Minnesota's native species belong to one of two basic categories: gymnosperms or angiosperms.

Gymnosperms are trees whose seeds are not encased in a structure such as a fruit or nut. Most gymnosperms bear their seeds in cones, so they are also called conifers ("conebearers"), and have thin needlelike leaves. Virtually all conifers are evergreen, meaning they are green year-round because they shed only a portion of their needles each year. People in the wood products industry often refer to coniferous trees as softwoods.

The second major kind of tree, the angiosperms, have covered seeds. Also known as deciduous or broadleaf trees, trees in this category drop their leaves each autumn. They are the ones that make the forest so colorful each fall. These trees are sometimes referred to as hardwoods (even though their wood is not necessarily harder than that of softwoods!).

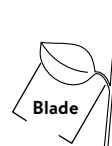


Red (Norway) Pine

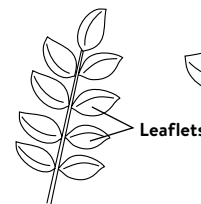
Fun Fact

The Norway pine, Minnesota's state tree, has nothing to do with Norway—in fact, in most places this species is called the red pine. It may have been given its "Minnesota" name by English settlers, who thought it resembled the Norwegian scotch pine. Others speculate that it took its name from the town of Norway, Maine, another locale where red pine was observed by early settlers.

A Quick Guide to Leaf Types



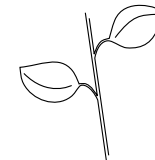
Simple leaves have only one leaf blade.



Compound leaves have many leaflets.



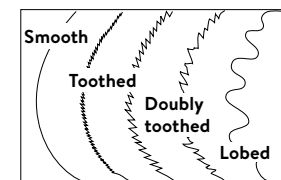
Opposite leaves grow directly across from one another, in pairs.



Alternate leaves grow singly along a branch, with space between each leaf.

Leaf Edges

Smooth leaves have smooth edges. Toothed leaves have jagged edges. Lobed leaves have rounded sections.



References

Try Minnesota's Bookstore for more information about identifying Minnesota's native trees.

Minnesota's Bookstore
117 University Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55155
(651) 297-3000 (Metro)
(800) 657-3757 (Toll free)

Trees of Minnesota, stock number 9-1, is a pocket-size, spiral-bound field guide to Minnesota's native tree species.

