

# Tree & Leaf Shape Cards

20 cards for identifying trees by their leaf shape – with a line drawing and key features.

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## What this file does for you

- 20 cards on the most important deciduous and coniferous trees.
- Each card shows the leaf shape as a clear line drawing for comparing.
- Features by shape, margin, arrangement and recognition – step by step.
- Two cards per page: print once, cut out, take outside with you.

Learn to read leaves – and identify any tree with confidence.

## How to identify a tree

Find a leaf and look first at the shape: round, lobed, palmate or pinnate? Then the margin and how the leaves sit on the twig. Compare with the cards – step by step you will find the tree.

## How to use the card set

Identified in five steps.

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- 1** Take the cards outside with you – ideally into a wood or park.
- 2** Find a leaf and place it next to the card.
- 3** Compare the leaf shape: round, lobed, palmate, pinnate or a needle.
- 4** Check the margin and the arrangement on the twig – what fits best?
- 5** Confirm with the recognition feature: bark, fruit or smell.

## The leaf shapes at a glance

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### Entire/toothed

Round or oval with a smooth or toothed margin (beech, lime).

### Lobed

With deep lobes – as in the oak.

### Palmate

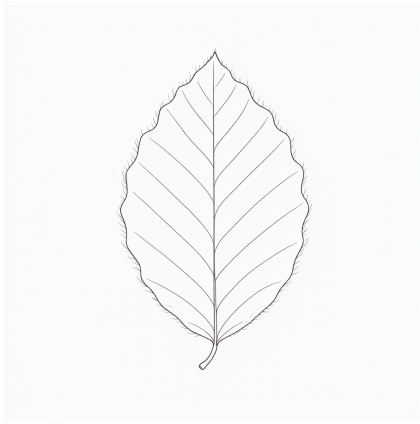
Several lobes from one point (maple, chestnut).

### Pinnate

Many small leaflets along a midrib (ash, walnut).

### Needles

Narrow needles, single or in bundles (spruce, pine, yew).



**European Beech**

**Shape**

oval, entire margin

**Margin**

wavy, finely ciliate

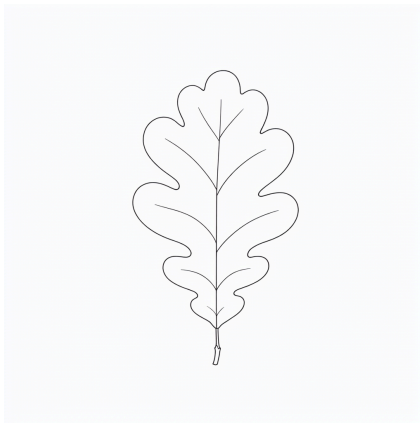
**Arrangement**

alternate

**Recognition**

Smooth grey bark, a dense canopy, beechnuts.

Tip: The leaves stay on the tree for a long time in winter.



**Oak**

**Shape**

deeply lobed

**Margin**

rounded lobes

**Arrangement**

alternate

**Recognition**

Gnarled bark, acorns, very old trees.

Tip: The deep lobes set it apart from all the others.

**Maple****Shape**

palmate, 5 lobes

**Margin**

coarsely toothed

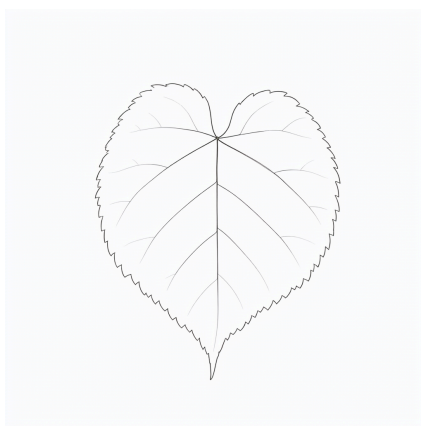
**Arrangement**

opposite

**Recognition**

Winged seeds (helicopter seeds), smooth bark.

Tip: Hold the leaves face to face and the palmate shape shows.

**Lime****Shape**

heart-shaped

**Margin**

toothed

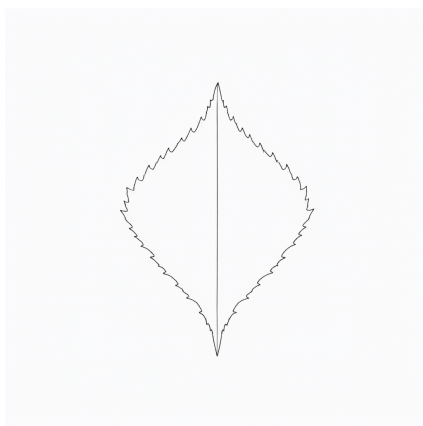
**Arrangement**

alternate

**Recognition**

Fragrant flowers in June, a lopsided leaf.

Tip: On the heart-shaped leaf the stalk joins to one side.

**Birch****Shape**

rhombic to triangular

**Margin**

double-toothed

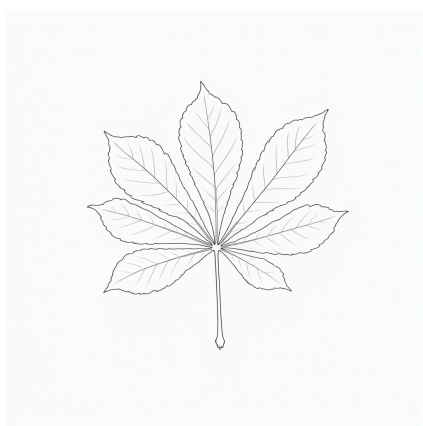
**Arrangement**

alternate

**Recognition**

White bark with dark rings.

Tip: It is the brightest tree bark in the wood.

**Horse Chestnut****Shape**

palmate, 5–7 leaflets

**Margin**

toothed

**Arrangement**

opposite

**Recognition**

Sticky buds, conkers in a spiky case.

Tip: The “false” chestnut – not for eating!

**Ash****Shape**

pinnate, 7–13 leaflets

**Margin**

toothed

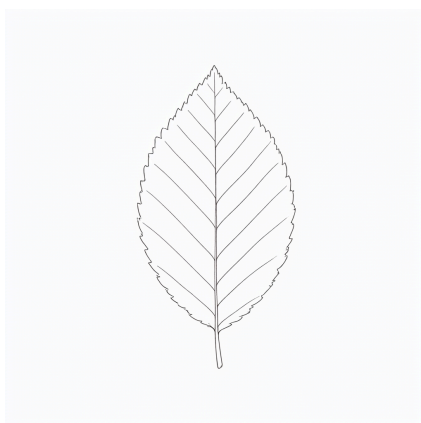
**Arrangement**

opposite

**Recognition**

Black buds, grey bark.

Tip: The buds are as black as ink.

**Hornbeam****Shape**

egg-shaped

**Margin**

finely double-toothed

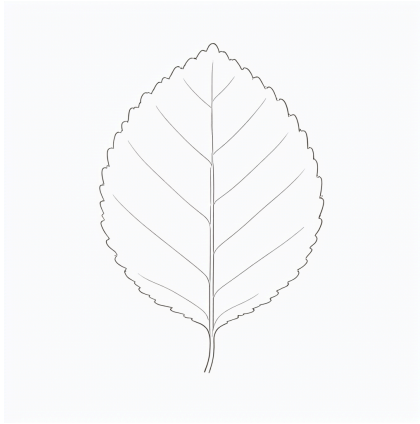
**Arrangement**

alternate

**Recognition**

Smooth, ridged bark like a muscle.

Tip: It bears no fruit, only small nutlets.

**Alder****Shape**

rounded, blunt

**Margin**

finely toothed

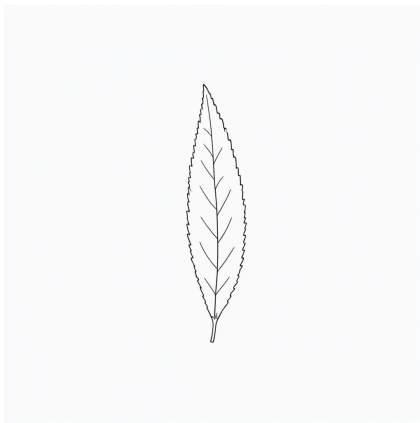
**Arrangement**

alternate

**Recognition**

Stays green for a long time, small alder cones.

Tip: Alder cones look like little fir cones.

**Willow****Shape**

narrowly lance-shaped

**Margin**

finely toothed

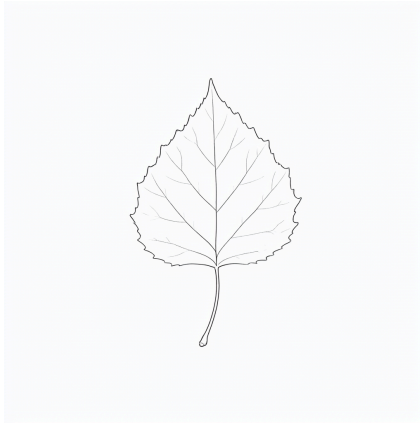
**Arrangement**

alternate

**Recognition**

Drooping branches, willow catkins in spring.

Tip: Its branches hang down like a curtain.



**Poplar**

**Shape**

triangular

**Margin**

toothed

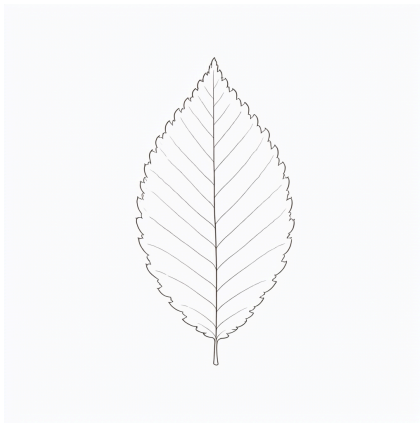
**Arrangement**

alternate

**Recognition**

Leaves flutter in the wind, tall growth.

Tip: The long leaf stalk makes the leaves tremble.



**Elm**

**Shape**

egg-shaped, oblique base

**Margin**

double-toothed

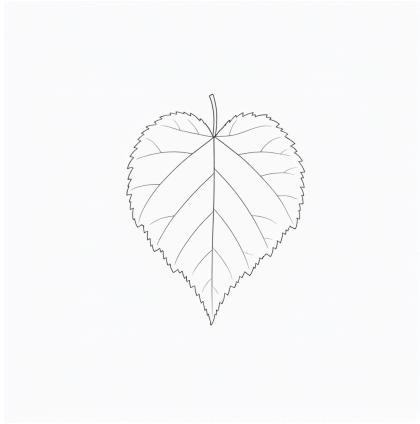
**Arrangement**

alternate

**Recognition**

Leaf uneven at the base, winged nutlets.

Tip: One half of the leaf sits lower – typical of the elm.

**Hazel****Shape**

rounded, heart-shaped base

**Margin**

coarsely toothed

**Arrangement**

alternate

**Recognition**

Hazelnuts, bushy growth.

Tip: In autumn you find its nuts in the shrub.

**Walnut****Shape**

pinnate, 5–9 leaflets

**Margin**

large, entire margin

**Arrangement**

alternate

**Recognition**

Large nuts with a hard shell.

Tip: Its leaves are much larger than those of the ash.

**Rowan****Shape**

pinnate

**Margin**

toothed

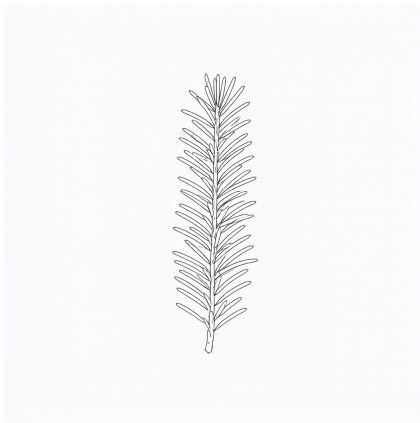
**Arrangement**

alternate

**Recognition**

Red berries in clusters.

Tip: The red berries glow far and wide in autumn.

**Spruce****Shape**

needle, four-sided

**Margin**

single on the twig

**Arrangement**

spiral

**Recognition**

Hanging cones, sharp needles all round.

Tip: The cone falls off whole – you find it under the tree.

**Fir****Shape**

flat needle

**Margin**

single, combed in two rows

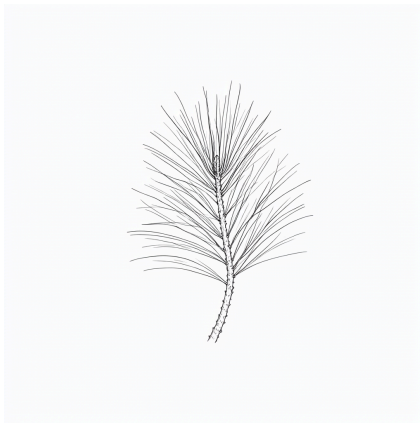
**Arrangement**

two rows

**Recognition**

Upright cones, needles smell of orange.

Tip: Its cone breaks up on the tree; you find only the spindles.

**Pine****Shape**

needle, 2 per bundle

**Margin**

bundled in pairs

**Arrangement**

in tufts

**Recognition**

Cones with scales, crown only at the top.

Tip: Rub the needles: they smell of resin.

**Larch****Shape**

needle tufts

**Margin**

many needles from one point

**Arrangement**

in tufts

**Recognition**

The only conifer to shed its needles in autumn.

Tip: In autumn it turns golden yellow and bare.

**Yew****Shape**

flat needle, two rows

**Margin**

single

**Arrangement**

alternate

**Recognition**

Red berries (caution, poisonous!).

Tip: Very old – stays green in the shade.