



Kids in the Woods Dichotomous Key



- 1A. Leaves are fan-shaped and leaf blades are at least 3 feet long. **Cabbage palm** (*Sabal palmetto*).
- 1B. Leaves are not as described above. **Go to 2.**
- 2A. Leaves are scale-like or small needles (awls). Leaves have a pleasant smell when crushed. **Eastern Red Cedar** (*Juniperus virginiana*).
- 2B. Leaves are not as described above. **Go to 3.**
- 3A. Leaves are compound (look for the bud). **Go to 4.**
- 3B. Leaves are simple (look for the bud). **Go to 5.**
- 4A. Leaves are opposite and typically have 5 leaflets that emerge from a single point (palmately compound). **Red Buckeye** (*Aesculus pavia*).
- 4B. Leaves are alternate and appear to have multiple branches and many leaflets. May have red fruit. **Nandina**. (*Nandina domestica*)- **Invasive!**
- 5A. Leaves are opposite. **Ligustrum** (*Ligustrum lucidum*)-**Invasive!**
- 5B. Leaves are alternate. **Go to 6.**
- 6A. Ends of twigs have a cluster of leaves. Leaf shape and size will vary. Fruit is an acorn. **Go to 7.**
- 6B. Ends of twigs do not have a cluster of leaves. **Go to 9.**
- 7A. Many of the leaves will be wider at the end of the leaf and narrower at the base of the leaf (spatulate). There are small clusters of hairs only where the veins join the midrib on the underside of the leaf. **Water oak** (*Quercus nigra*).
- 7B. Leaves are not as described above. **Go to 8.**
- 8A. Edge (margin) of leaf is smooth (entire) and leaf shape is elliptic or linear with no hairs on the underside of the leaf. **Laurel Oak** (*Quercus laurifolia*).
- 8A. Leaf margins are shallowly lobed with prominent veins. Leaf shape is widest just above the middle of the leaf (obovate). Hairs are present on the underside of the whole leaf. Bark of mature tree is light tan. **Swamp Chestnut Oak** (*Quercus michauxii*).
- 9A. Edge of leaf (margin) is entire. **Go to 10.**
- 9B. Edge of leaf (margin) is not entire. **Go to 12.**
- 10A. Leaf size is 4-8 inches long and shiny dark green on the upper surface. Scar completely encircles twig where leaves attach. **Southern Magnolia** (*Magnolia grandiflora*).

10B. Leaves are not as described above. **Go to 11.**

11A. Leaf size is 1-3 inches long and shiny dark green on upper surface. Two small bumps (callosities) are on the upper surface where the main veins join the midrib. Leaves have distinct medicinal smell when crushed.

Camphor (*Cinnamomum camphora*)- **Invasive!**

11B. Leaf size is 1-4 inches long and shiny dark green on upper surface and light green on lower surface. Some leaves may have teeth (serrations). Leaves smell like cherry when crushed. **Carolina Laurel Cherry** (*Prunus caroliniana*).

12A. Leaf is lobed (typically star shaped) and has a distinct smell when crushed. **Sweetgum** (*Liquidambar styraciflua*).

12B. Leaf is not lobed. **Go to 13.**

13A. Base of the leaf is larger on one side of the midrib than the other side (inequilateral). **Go to 14.**

13B. Base of the leaf is equal in size (equilateral). **Go to 16.**

14A. Portion of leaf margin may be entire and/or toothed (dentate or serrate). Bark of the tree often appears to have wart-like growths on the surface. **Sugarberry** (*Celtis laevigata*).

14B. Leaf margin has serrations on serrations (doubly serrate). **Go to 15.**

15A. Base of the leaf joins midrib/petiole at the same point. Leaf size is 1-2 inches. Twigs often have wing-like appendages. **Winged Elm** (*Ulmus alata*).

15B. Base of leaf does not join midrib/petiole at same point (oblique). Leaves are 2-3 inches. **American Elm** (*Ulmus Americana*).

16A. Leaf margin is crenate and leaf is thick and leathery. May have small red berries present (don't eat). **Coral Ardisia** (*Ardisia crenata*)- **Invasive!**

16B. Leaf margins are serrate or spiny. **Go to 17.**

17A. Leaf is dark green on upper surface and leaf margin has stiff and sharp spines. **American Holly** (*Ilex opaca*).

17B. Leaves are not as described above. **Go to 18.**

18A. The upper surface of the leaf is dark green and leaf margin has a variable amount of serrations. Leaves smell like cherry when crushed. **Carolina Laurel Cherry** (*Prunus caroliniana*).

18B. Leaf margin is serrate. Mature tree bark is grey. **Ironwood** (*Carpinus caroliniana*).