



What is an Urban Forest?

Pre-Activities (Grades 2-5)

Urban forests are located within a city or town. They can include urban parks, street trees, landscaped boulevards, gardens, rivers, greenways, river corridors, wetlands, nature preserves, and more!

Define an urban forest

- Ask the students what their home and surrounding green environment looks like. Have the students talk about their answers in small groups and then share with the whole class.
- Talk about what an urban forest is with the whole class
 - Reference [Oregon Department of Forestry](#)
 - Write comments on a board and reflect on how these observations overlap with their small group findings.

Explore forest layers

- All forests have distinctive layers. Introduce the layers to students using these descriptions of [Forest Layers](#).
- After listening to and/or reading the descriptions, instruct students to draw their own forest. Encourage them to add fauna and labels to depict each, distinct layer.

Learn about and practice with a dichotomous key

- A dichotomous key is a method used to identify a species by answering a series of questions based on contrasting physical features that have two possible outcomes.
- What is used for?
 - Identifying and categorizing organisms
 - Organizing large amounts of information to make identification of an organism much easier
- Reference, [different examples of keys](#)
- Collect samples of different leaves and use this [tree dichotomous key](#) to find out what tree they came from.

Take your students outside for a nature walk

- Explore the area surrounding your school and see if students can locate and define layers of forest.
- Look for natural items on the ground and discuss what forest layer they might belong to. For example, did the maple seed fall from the canopy or understory?





Best Tree Forever

Post-Activities (Grades 2-5)

Now it's time to have your students locate their BTF back at home or school. Encourage them to use the clues they learned at Hoyt Arboretum to find their tree. The activities below can help them learn and observe more about their tree over time. Or if they can't find the same tree, maybe they search for a new one to explore!

Build a tree journal

- Have your students locate their BTF near school
- Draw pictures of their BTF from various perspectives: from a distance, from lying underneath it, from standing next to its trunk.
- Writing a poem or story about your BTF.
- Each time you visit your BTF, document changes you notice since the last visit and remember to record dates and times
- Take photographs of your tree every visit. Look at several of the different photographs at once. In what ways has your tree changed and in what ways is it the same?
- Make a label for the tree so others know what it is

Tree Rings Tell a Story

- Tree cross-sections and rings can tell us a lot about what happened to that tree during its life
- Use [these diagrams](#) to learn how to read the different events that might have occurred
- Invite students to draw a tree cookie the same age as themselves
 - What major events happened in their lives?
 - How can they show those events in the rings?
 - Have them label the events
- Read this [New York Times article](#) to learn more

