



# Rainforest Tree ID

## LESSON PLAN

### What Can Be Learned?

Temperate rainforest can be characterised by three main features: high rainfall, the fact that it does not require disturbance (eg fire) to regenerate, and also by the type of tree species present.

Tasmanian temperate rainforest is dominated by myrtle, leatherwood, celery-top pine, sassafras, Huon pine, pencil pine, and King Billy pine. Deciduous beech and blackwood may also be present.

Through this activity students can learn to identify temperate rainforest tree species and also about how the forest is used and valued.

### Materials Required

Paper, coloured paper, pencils, pens glue tape  
digital camera

In a bag (the rainforest product bag):  
leatherwood honey & tasting sticks (paddle pop sticks)

eucalyptus lollies and cough drops

eucalyptus oil

mountain pepper berries or ground leaves

blackwood seeds (ground, they are used for cooking)

or other products such as blackwood seed pasta,  
celery stalks

huon pine item, a bowl for example, or some shavings

moisturising body lotion with ingredients from  
tropical rainforest and/or other tropical rainforest  
products

Tasmanian rainforest soap

laminated sheet of rainforest leaf samples

You will need to adjust this list to reflect trees from  
the local area or site you are to visit.

### The Activity

This activity involves both outdoor and classroom-based activities.

- **To start:**

Pass out some samples of leaves:

myrtle

sassafras

mountain pepper

leatherwood

others such as celery-top, Huon, King Billy or pencil

pine if available

Ask the students: Do you recognize these leaves?  
What rainforest trees do you think they are from?

Some clues: Myrtle is Tasmanian rainforest's most common tree, the leaf is shaped like Tasmania; sassafras has a distinctive smell when crushed; mountain pepper has a memorable taste (best to have students put it on their tongue rather than bite into it); leatherwood is well known for its unique honey; celery-top pine leaves look very much like actual celery leaves.



Rainforests E-Set suited to lower secondary students.

- **In the rainforest**

Give students the laminated leaf sample sheets to take into the forest for identification purposes.

As students identify a tree pass around the appropriate products from the rainforest product bag. Take digital photos of each tree as it is identified.

If the students have prepared any food using rainforest products, take it along for a snack during the walk.

Products and some uses are listed below:

**Leatherwood** - Taste honey (make sure used sticks go into rubbish bags). 60 tons of Tasmanian Leatherwood honey is exported overseas every year.

**Celery top pine** - Compare celery leaves to celery top pine leaves (phyllodes), compare size of seeds to size of tree (as compared to a new born in relation to adult)

**Eucalypt** - pass out lollies (wrappers in rubbish bag) smell eucalyptus oil (get someone to read the label – like they're doing an ad)

**Huon pine** - feel and smell item or smell shavings

**Mountain pepper** - The dried and ground leaves can be bought to use in cooking, as can the berries (used as peppercorns). These are exported to other countries.

**Blackwood seeds** - They are available commercially and are used to flavour biscuits, ice cream, chocolate, desserts, baked goods and as a coffee substitute. The appendage that connects the seed to the pod is the aril. These are also nutritious.

**Sassafras** - Often used for fine woodwork products. If the tree is infected with a staining fungus



#### FURTHER INFORMATION

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Internet: [www.parks.tas.gov.au](http://www.parks.tas.gov.au) June 2009 © State of Tasmania

it's called black heart sassafras, and has attractive, dark streaks. Pass around an example. Sassafras oil is also used to treat nits!

#### General products

Body lotion - let them rub this into their hands

Rainforest soap - pass this around to smell.

- **Nearing the end of the walk:**

Stop for a short time. Ask the students to close their eyes, stand or sit quietly, and take a few deep breaths.

Tasmanian rainforest provides us with commercial products, but more importantly it provides us with two basic things we need for survival: **Oxygen** and **Water**.

Discuss with the students the oxygen and carbon dioxide cycles.

Feel the air around you. As you enter a rainforest you might notice that the air becomes moist and cool. This is because trees also contribute to the water cycle by slowly releasing water back into the atmosphere. This process is called transpiration. Trees play an essential part in the water cycle.

Ask the students to find their own space, sit quietly for one minute and look, listen and take in some lungfulls of fresh rainforest air. Although the forest has many uses, lots of people value Tasmanian rainforest for its beauty and peacefulness.

Ask the students to list the values and uses found in a rainforest: – it provides us with medicines, cosmetics, food, timber, clean air, fresh water, and some beautiful places to visit.

- **Back in the classroom:**

Split the students into groups to create identification pages to the trees found in the rainforest. They can use the leaves from the laminated sheet to trace or draw.

Refer to plant books to look up latin names and characteristics. There is also information on the Web.

Print the tree photos taken during the site visit for students to add to the identification pages.

Valuing Rainforests E-Set - Lesson Plan

E-Sets are an Electronic Environmental and Educational set of notes for teachers