Vermont Tree Guide: Top 9 Species

Tree identification can be daunting task. This guide is intended to help get you started by focusing on the top nine most common forest tree species in Vermont. Approximately 80% of all trees in Vermont are the following nine species. There are an additional 40 trees species that total the remaining 20%. Some species are more locally abundant than others, but this guide highlights the most distinguishing features of each species. If you would like to learn more about a particular species visit go.uvm.edu/vermonttrees for a short video and additional identifying characteristics.

**SUGAR MAPLE**
*Acer saccharum*

**BRANCH PATTERN:** Opposite.

**LEAVES:** Five major points, no teeth or serrate margin. Dark green above, pale color below.

**BARK:** Brownish gray, can have a whitewashed appearance; never shaggy.

**HABITAT:** Forests with moist, well-drained soils.

**FUN FACT:** Vermont’s State Tree!

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**RED MAPLE**
*Acer rubrum*

**BRANCH PATTERN:** Opposite.

**LEAVES:** Three major points, has serrate margin; green in summer and turns red in fall.

**BARK:** Bluish-gray, ranges from smooth to very shaggy.

**BUDS:** Round, red, found in clusters.

**HABITAT:** Wide range from dry to moist soils, low to high elevation.

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**EASTERN HEMLOCK**
*Tsuga canadensis*

**LEAVES:** Needles are flat, tapering, and rounded at the tip and grow in an irregular pattern. Two white stripes are found on the underside of each needle.

**BARK:** Gray-brown, relatively smooth; becomes cinnamon brown, with thick, ridges forming flat plates.

**CONES:** 3/4 inch long, oblong, light brown.

**HABITAT:** Often grows in shaded forest, very little understory vegetation.

For informational videos about each species, visit go.uvm.edu/vermonttrees

**EASTERN WHITE PINE**  
*Pinus strobus*

- **LEAVES:** Long, slender needles (3-6 inches) in groups of 5.
- **BARK:** Smooth, develops scales that form ridges.
- **BRANCHES:** In whorls, circles the stem.
- **HABITAT:** Pioneer species on old fields and other disturbed sites.

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**YELLOW BIRCH**  
*Betula alleghaniensis*

- **LEAVES:** Simple, double toothed edge.
- **BARK:** Golden, metallic in color.
- **TWIGS:** Taste/smells like wintergreen when a twig is broken.
- **HABITAT:** Well and poorly drained sites, mixed with hardwood species.

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**AMERICAN BEECH**  
*Fagus grandifolia*

- **LEAVES:** Leaves have one tooth at the end of each vein.
- **BARK:** Healthy bark is very smooth, gray; diseased bark is pockmarked.
- **FRUIT:** Husk with hooked prickles encapsulates triangular nuts; important wildlife food source.
- **HABITAT:** Shade tolerant, well drained sites.

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**WHITE ASH**  
*Fraxinus americana*

- **LEAVES:** Opposite, compound, 5-7 leaflets.
- **BARK:** Interlocking diamond pattern.
- **HABITAT:** Well-drained soils, mixed hardwoods.

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**RED SPRUCE**  
*Picea rubens*

- **LEAVES:** Spikey needles (1/2 inch long), angular in cross section.
- **BARK:** Gray to reddish-brown, lacks resin blisters.
- **HABITAT:** Both conifer and mixed woods forests.

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**BALSAM FIR**  
*Abies balsamea*

- **LEAVES:** Needles are flat (3/4-1 inch) attached to twig by a "suction cup".
- **BARK:** Mottled, silver in color with resin blisters.
- **HABITAT:** Shade tolerant, found in conifer forests.