

Sycamore Tree Activity

Suggested activity time

15–20 minutes

You will need

Leaf ID sheet
Seed ID sheet



For **Curriculum links and learning objectives** see the Autumn programme

Activity

Gather children around the Sycamore tree and let them give the tree a big hug. Do they think it is rough or smooth? The Sycamore tree has smooth bark and as a result, mini-beasts are unable to find a safe home anywhere on the trunk. Let the children use the Leaf ID sheets to identify the leaf. Once they have done so, ask them to describe it. Does it have any leaflets? Is it hairy? Does it have curvy edges like the oak, or is it more pointed?

Information to read to children

I call this tree my spotty friend! Why is that...well have a look at the leaves, some or possibly all of them have **black spots** on them. The sycamore leaf will usually have black spots over it. These are called Tar Spots. Who thinks this shows an **unhealthy** tree? They are a type of fungi, but will only appear if the air is clean. Can anyone find and name the **seed** from this tree?

Challenge: Find one leaf each with black spots on it. Count how many spots are on your leaf - who has the most?

Ask them if they know the name of the tree. Clue - the black spots make it look unhealthy - another word for unhealthy is...SICK...is there a tree that starts its name with SICK / SYC...sycamore! Let the children work this out with as little adult input as possible. Once they have worked out the name, tell them that although it looks sick, it isn't. The black spots are a sign that the air is clean and healthy. Dirty, polluted air would kill off the black tar spots! Everyone should now take a deep breath in and out of fresh, clean air!

Ask the children if they can find any sign of seeds or nuts. After a quick look, they should hopefully find the helicopter seeds. Ask them why they think they are this shape - follow the same rule as used for ash. Explain that they rely on wind for transportation. They need to grow in an area which has plenty of space away from the mother tree. This will ensure they have enough nutrients, room to spread their branches, sunlight and moisture. The seeds are called helicopters. If you find some, allow the children to throw them in the air and watch them spin to somewhere new.

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