

## December - Week 5

### Observing Tree Shapes: *Coniferous and Deciduous Trees*

**The shapes of trees are easier to observe** and compare in winter than in other seasons. Coniferous trees remain green, holding their needles year-round. They are able to do this with help from their branching pattern and canopy shape. Deciduous trees on the other hand, shed their leaves in autumn and expose their branching pattern.

Go outside and observe the branching patterns of trees. Examine the differences in the overall shape of a tree. Draw an outline of a deciduous and a coniferous tree. Once you've done so, add in details including the branches. Do they point upward in the canopy forming a "Y" pattern? Do the branches spread out wide near the bottom and taper in length as you look further up the tree, forming an "A" pattern? Deciduous trees often fit within the "Y" pattern while coniferous trees form an "A-frame" which allows them to hold snow on their branches and leaves without the weight of the snow snapping the branches off.

Once you have drawn the trees, look closer to observe the needles on the conifers and the buds on the deciduous tree branches. Make note of any additional patterns (bundled needles or single needles; opposite or alternate bud locations on branches) and identify the tree species with help from a field guide. This week and throughout winter, notice how the snow lands and sits on the branches of trees and also how the snow depth compares beneath and around the bases of both coniferous and deciduous trees.

