Winter

Coniferous trees

- ☐ **Balsam Fir**
- ☐ **Spruce (Black, Blue, Red, White)**
- ☐ **Eastern Hemlock**
- ☐ **Eastern White Cedar**
- ☐ **Eastern White Pine**

Balsam Fir - Balsam firs produce **barrel-shaped** pinecones that are greyish brown and grow **upright.** Most of the pinecones will be at the **top** of the tree. When it's young, it's bark is covered in **sap blisters**. Balsam firs have **flat, dark green** needles with **white bands** underneath.

Did you know? The balsam fir tree is ornamental, usually selected for use as Christmas Trees.
Be careful not to rub against balsams! The sticky sap is always on the tree!
Identify through the needles! One way to identify a Tree is by the needles. If they roll between your fingers, then they are probably Cedar, or Spruce. Balsam Firs have **flat** needles. Next, identify if the needles grow in clusters of about 5. If they do, then the tree is probably a white pine. To identify if the tree you have found is a Balsam, not Hemlock, you need to look closer. Does the needle join onto the twig? Or is the needle attached to a small stem, which in turn is attached to the twig? If it is the second, then it is not a Balsam, it is a Hemlock. If the needle is attached directly to the twig, then it is a **Balsam Fir!**

Eastern Hemlock – The shape of an Eastern Hemlock is **cone-like**. When a tree is young, it has **scaly bark.** As it ages, it **cracks** deeply. Hemlocks grow prosperously on rocky ridges, hillsides, ravines, and other highland climates that are humid and cool. The needles of an Eastern Hemlock look a lot like a Balsam Fir's, but Eastern Hemlock's needles are joined to the twig by a small stem, where Fir needles join directly with the twig.

Did you know? Unlike Balsam Fir and Black Spruce, Eastern Hemlock is **not** commonly used as a Christmas Tree, as, once cut down, it tends to shed its needles very quickly.

Eastern White Cedar – White Cedars have a narrow cone shape. When alone, their branches extend down to the ground. On young trees, the bark of a white Cedar is smooth and thin. As

the tree matures, it will separate into narrow, flat, ridges. The bark is stringy and flakey, and peels readily.

Instead of needles, the cedar leaves form tiny scales growing one on top of each other and branching out. White Cedar is a large source of shelter and food for many different animals, like the white-tailed deer, especially during winter. If you look along the edges of the lake, you can see where the deer in winter have nibbled the cedar branches while standing on the ice.

> **Did you know?** Eastern White Cedar seeds have a defence against squirrels! They consist of two or three blisters, which contain a bad-tasting resin.
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> **Did you know?** The First Peoples used Eastern White Cedar leaves to treat scurvy (Vitamin C deficiency), a disease that people get when they do not eat fruits and vegetables.

Eastern White Pine – It is easy to identify a White Pine, as its needles are *always* in **bunches of 5!** If you forget the number, just think of the number of letters in 'white.' If you look closely at where the needle joins the twig, is it just one needle that is attached in that one spot? Or are there multiple needles? Five, to be precise? If five needles are attached to the twig at the **same spot,** then it is a White Pine!

If the tree is planted in a windy area, it can become lopsided with small, short branches on the side that faces the wind. The cones of an Eastern White Pine are 8-20 cm long, narrowly conic, slightly curved, yellowish green to light brown, and hang from the branches.

> **Did you know?** The Eastern White Pine is the tallest tree in Eastern Canada!
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> **Did you know?** The Eastern White Pine is Ontario's official tree!

Spruce: Spruce have four-sided needles attached to hairy twigs. The needles are short and stiff and grow from all directions around the twig. Cones are 2 to 5 cm long, depending on the species, and are mainly on the topmost branches.

There are a few species of Spruce – Red, White, Blue, and Black. If you're looking for a challenge, try to find one of each!

> **Did you know?** Red spruce wood is often used in the manufacturing of string instruments.
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> **Did you know?** Black Spruce has been used by Indigenous people of North America to make poultices, infusions, decoctions, and other natural remedies for hundreds of years!
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> **Did you know?** Black spruces' cones will open slowly over time, but, in the event of a wildfire, will open very quickly.