**Saline County Leaf Collection**

Trees are like people, they have characteristics that set them apart from one another. Before you can do much work on a forestry activity, you should learn how to identify common trees. A good way to learn how to identify trees is to make a leaf collection.

**Types of leaves**

There are two main types of trees: broadleaf and coniferous. Coniferous trees have leaves that are needle like or scale like. When identifying broadleaf trees, you first must learn about arrangement of the leaves. The terms used to describe leaf arrangement are alternate and opposite. These terms describe the location of the leaves on a twig. Alternate leaves means that leaves are located on alternate sides of the twig. Opposite leaves means that two leaves are directly across from each other on the twig. Most trees in Arkansas have alternate leaves.

The next step is to determine if leaves are simple or compound. Simple leaves have single blades. Compound leaves have more than one blade on the stem. These blades are called leaflets. A leaf can be distinguished from a compound leaflet by the bud on the twig at the base of the leaf. There is no bud at the base of a leaflet.

The third step is to determine whether the leaf edge is smooth, toothed, or lobed.

**How to make a leaf collection**

Collect typical sized and shaped leaf specimens without holes or spots. You will then need to dry your leaves. You can use a plant press, but if you don’t have access to one, take your leaf specimens and place them between the pages of a catalog, magazine or newspaper. Make sure you identify the leaf before putting to dry. Let your leaves dry at least overnight. You can put a little pressure on top of the magazines to keep the leaves flat like stacking some books on top of it. When you collect compound leaves, collect the entire leaf when possible and not just a single leaflet.

**Directions for Leaf Collection Challenge:**

1. Any Saline County 4-H member may participate.

2. Submit a fresh mounted collection of at least THREE (3) leaves of Arkansas trees according to the following specifications:

    a. Each specimen shall be dried and individually displayed in a conventional 3-ring binder or simple folder. The specimens may be mounted on self-adhering transparent plastic sheets or other similar material. Gluing or taping the specimen directly to the paper is also acceptable.

    b. A label should be hand-written or glued to the corner of each display sheet. The label shall contain at least the scientific and common name of the tree. A general description of the leaf characteristics (e.g. alternate vs opposite, simple vs compound, etc.) is optional.

3. Don’t forget to have fun. These activities should be challenging, but never “frustrating.” If you’re struggling with identification or the notebook materials – it’s okay to reach out to your Saline County 4-H Agent for help or to request accommodations. An example leaf collection page is below.

**Example of Leaf Collection Page**

