

## About CCFPD

The forest preserves are great places to visit year-round, with loads to see and do in the fall.



# Fall Activity Guide



## Make more of your fall with CCFPD

- Visit the Natural Playscape at Homer Lake Forest Preserve.
- Check out the night sky at the first and only International Dark Sky Park in Illinois-Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. Visit [www.ccfpd.org](http://www.ccfpd.org) for more information and directions.
- Check out the programs we offer throughout the year at the preserves by visiting [www.ccfpd.org](http://www.ccfpd.org).
- Visit the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Gardens at Lake of the Woods, they do an amazing job decorating for the fall season.



# What's Inside

Autumn (or fall) is a great time to be outside in nature. The leaves are changing colors (yellows, browns, reds, oranges), the temperature becomes cooler, and animals are preparing for winter.

It is a great opportunity to slow down and notice all nature has to offer.

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# Exploring Acorns

Did you know that there are a lot of different oak trees around here? That means there are a lot of different acorns. Go on a walk looking for acorns. Can you find different ones?

Here are the different oaks you can find in Champaign County.



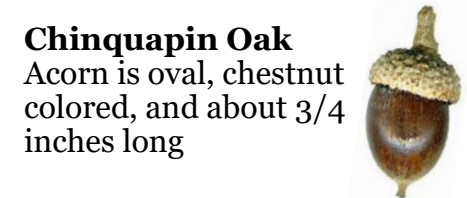
**Swamp White Oak**  
Acorn is pale brown, one inch or longer oval shape



**Shingle Oak**  
Acorn is round, reddish in color and slightly hairy



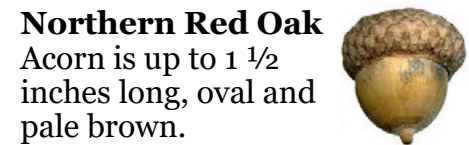
**Black Oak**  
Acorn is oval, reddish brown and up to 3/4 inches long



**Chinquapin Oak**  
Acorn is oval, chestnut colored, and about 3/4 inches long



**Pin Oak**  
Acorn is 1/2 inch long, brown with darker lines, and has a thin cup



**Northern Red Oak**  
Acorn is up to 1 1/4 inches long, oval and pale brown.



**White Oak**  
Acorn is up to 3/4 inches long and green to greenish brown

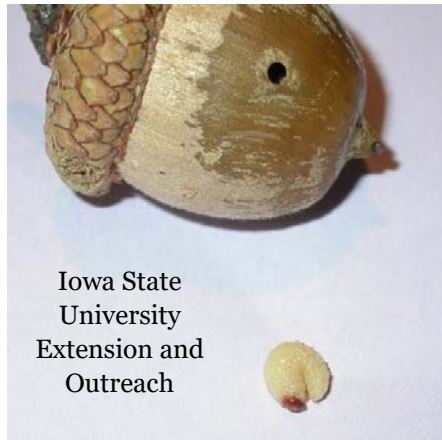


**Bur Oak**  
Acorn can be up to 1 3/4 inches long and is light brown with a hairy cap

# What's That Hole In My Acorn?

Have you ever picked up an acorn that has a small round hole in it? It is made by an insect called an acorn weevil.

Adult acorn weevils have an extremely long snout. On the end of it are jaws that they will use to cut a hole into the side of an acorn. They do this in the summer while the acorns are still up in the oak trees. The female weevil will then lay an egg inside the acorn. She can lay up to three larva in each acorn. To keep them safe inside the acorn, she plugs the hole with her scat.



Acorn weevil hole and weevil larvae

The young acorn weevil larvae hatch inside the acorn after one or two weeks. While the larvae is growing, it feeds on the nutmeat inside the acorn.

When the acorns fall out of the tree and hit the ground, it signals the weevil larvae to chew their way out. Once it breaks free, it tunnels down into the ground where it will spend the winter. It will stay underground for up to 5 years before it emerges as an adult.



Acorn Weevil Adult

# Tips for a Great Outdoor Adventure in the Fall



Here are some tips to help make the most of your time outdoors.

1. **Plan Ahead.** Research where you are heading. For example, if you are going to one of the Champaign County Forest Preserves, visit [www.CCFPD.org](http://www.CCFPD.org) where you can find trail maps, open hours, attractions and highlights, and driving directions. Also, be sure to check out the weather before heading out to make sure there won't be any storms approaching.
2. **Dress Properly.** Fall weather can be unpredictable. Temperatures can change quickly and a storm can roll in fast. Dressing in layers is important, that way you can remove some layers if you get warmer or add more if you are cold. Also, wear shoes you don't mind getting muddy.
3. **Stay Hydrated.** It is easy to remember to drink water when the weather is hot but it is still important when the weather gets cooler. Bring water with you when heading outdoors. You can also stay hydrated by eating apples and berries that are high in water.
4. **Respect Nature.** Never chase or harass wildlife. This may cause them to use up valuable energy needed for survival. Always leave a natural area in better condition than you found it in. Please don't let trash become litter.



# Seed Search

Fall is a time for some plants and trees to produce and disperse seeds. Seeds come in lots of different shapes and sizes. They can be found in lots of places - in your neighborhood, the forest preserves, and even in your own backyard!

Head outside and look for different types of seeds. Sort them by size and/or shape. An empty egg carton makes a great sorting tool.



# Traveling Seeds

Did you know that seeds can travel? They don't have legs but different seeds have different ways of moving around. Look at the seeds you found. Can you figure out how they move around?

## Seeds that float or fly in the air

Some seeds travel by wind. If the wind is just right they can travel hundreds of miles!



Cottonwood tree seeds



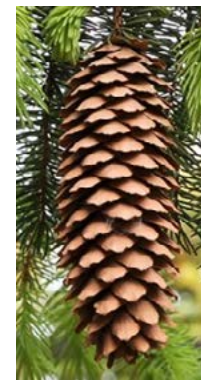
Maple seeds fly through the air like helicopters

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# Pine Cone Experiment

Try this experiment to make a pine cone open/close their scales.

1. Go out and find two or three pine cones; you can find them in your neighborhood, your backyard or your local forest preserve/park.
2. Are the pine cones you collected open or closed?
3. Place the three pine cones in a big bowl of cold water.
4. After a half hour, check on your pine cones. Are the scales closed? They close their scales when the weather is cold and wet to protect their seeds.
5. You can get your cones to open by putting them somewhere warm and dry. If it is warm outside, you can place the cones outside in the sun. Or you can place them near a window that gets lots of sun.
6. Check on your cones throughout the day. As they warm up and dry they will open up. Cones open up in the spring time when the weather starts warming up and drop their seeds.



Open Spruce Cone



Closed Spruce Cone

# Pine Cones

Fall is the perfect time to see a lot of pine cones. Pine cones come specifically from pine trees, but all conifers (tree with needle like leaves) produce cones. They grow both male and female pine cones. The male cones produce pollen in the spring time. They are much smaller than the female cones and are only alive for a short time. Female cones are the bigger cones with woody scales.

The female cone's job is to protect their seeds. They close their scales to protect the seeds from cold temperatures, wind and animals that try to eat them. When the weather warms up in the spring, the cones open up and release their seeds.



Male cones on pine tree



Female cones on pine tree

## Did You Know?

The largest pine cones in the world are from the Coulter Pines found in of California. These giant cones can weigh up to 11 pounds.



## Seeds that bounce or roll

Hard or round seeds may bounce or roll some distance when they fall from the tree, like Walnuts.



Walnuts

## Seeds that are eaten by animals

Some seeds travel inside animals. The animal eats fruit and then poops out the seeds!



Apples



Choke cherries

## Seeds that are stored by animals

Some seeds travel from the help of animals like squirrels. They hide food for the winter by burying them in the ground. They find most of these buried nuts but not all of them. Those that are forgotten can grow in the spring.



Acorns

## Seeds that stick to animals



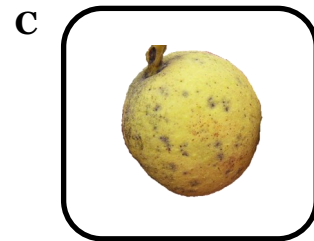
Burdock seeds

Some seeds hitch rides on animals. The seeds have barbs (or hooks) that stick to animal fur and can also stick on our pant legs.

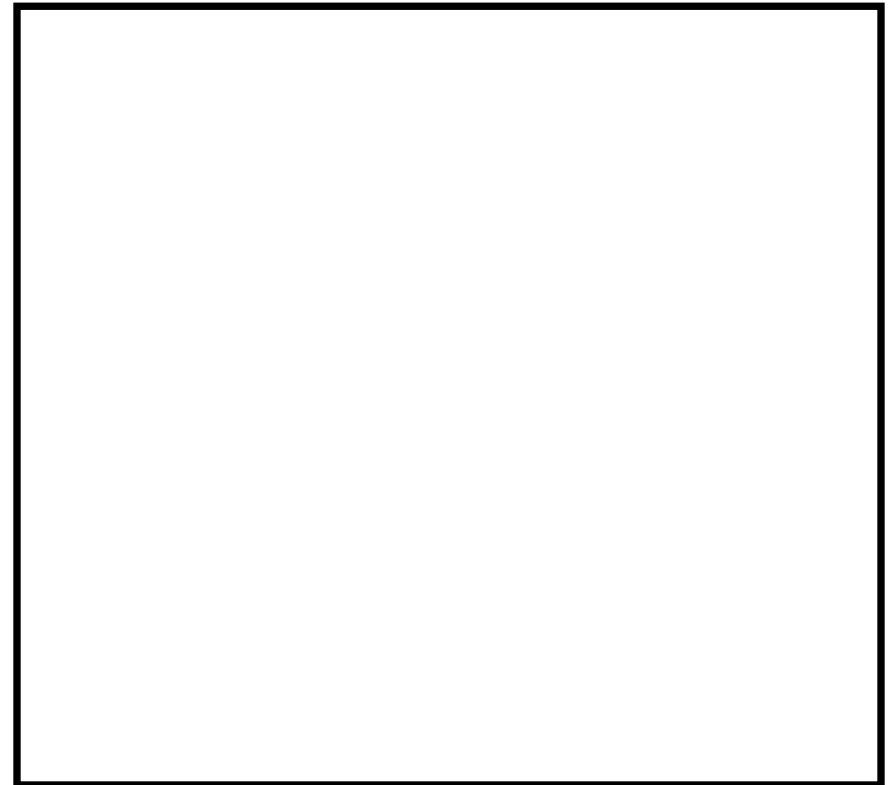


# Match Seed to Tree

Can you match the seed to its tree?



Draw a picture of the leaf people/animals you created.



# Leaf People

Create people and animal faces using materials from nature.

1. Explore your backyard or the forest preserve for natural objects to use in your art. Make sure to only use natural items that are no longer being used. Examples of things to use: tree seeds that are on the ground (not still on the tree), flower petals that have fallen off the flower and leaves that have fallen off trees.
2. Use your found natural materials to create faces of people or animals on the ground.

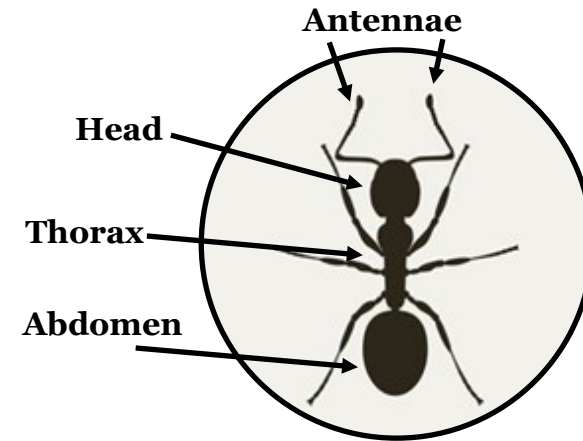


# A Bug's Life

Fall is a great time to see a lot of different insects moving around. What makes a bug an insect?

An insect is a special kind of bug that has to have:

- Six legs (connected to thorax)
- 2 antennae
- 3 body parts (head, thorax, abdomen)



Which of these bugs are insects?



Honey Bee



Worm



Grasshopper



Spider

# Nature Scavenger Hunt

The cooler temperatures that fall brings makes it the perfect time to go on a nature hike. During the fall there is all sorts to see when you head outdoors, including changing colors and animals on the move.



**Spider and/or spider web**



**Grasshopper or cricket**



**Acorn with hole in side**



**Seeds that stick to your clothes**



**A tree with orange leaves**



**A squirrel burying seeds for the winter**



**Animal burrows in the ground**



**A leaf that is bigger than your head**



**Maple Seeds, also called helicopters**