Connecting Kids to Nature

Try this activity in a forest—a natural place to learn!

For over 30 years, Project Learning Tree® has used the forest as a "window" to help young people gain an awareness of the world around them and their place within it. Blending a walk in the forest with a fun and engaging PLT activity creates a powerful learning experience for children of all ages. Here's one idea in a series from PLT that introduces the concept of **forest cycles.**

Activity 65: Bursting Buds

In early spring, the tiny, bright green leaves of many trees burst forth. Where do the leaves come from? How do they form? In this activity, children will find the answers to these questions through observation and research.

Doing the Activity

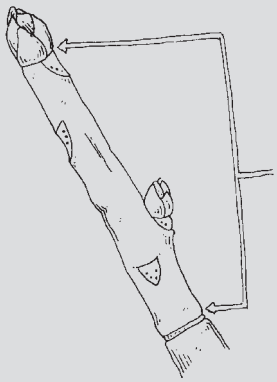
The Spring is a wonderful time to go outside. When walking through a wooded area, take a moment to draw attention to tree twigs and branches. Have children search for buds and then choose a single twig to study. Have them:

- Hold the branch for examination
- Point out the different features they can see
- Gently split open a bud and examine the leaves tucked inside

Explain that tree twigs have different identifiable parts. Children could use a digital camera—or sketchbook—to record what they see. Back indoors, have children draw a picture of their twig and then use the internet or a tree identification guide to label the different parts. Finally, ask children how they think buds change into leaves. One week later, visit the same tree so children can see the change.

For a children's science book about the structure and purpose of leaves, check out *How Leaves Change* by Sylvia A. Johnson, published by Lerner Publications, 1989, ISBN: 0822595133.

Can you identify the terminal bud; side bud; leaf scars; bud scale scar?



Do this word search puzzle to discover some components of a branch. Look below for the answers.

R	S	K	R	A	B	U	D
B	E	C	N	R	T	T	I
N	L	W	A	O	I	H	W
R	A	N	O	R	D	A	M
O	C	H	M	L	S	E	H
H	S	L	E	A	F	T	F
T	A	B	T	W	I	G	Z
M	P	W	S	P	F	E	Y

Adapted from Activity 65: Bursting Buds from Project Learning Tree's *PreK-8 Environmental Education Activity Guide.*

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Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is a program of the American Forest Foundation. In Ohio, PLT is sponsored by the Department of Natural Resources - Division of Forestry and Project Learning Tree - Ohio.

DID YOU KNOW?

By the time a tree's leaves drop in the fall, its leaves for the next spring are already formed. Tiny leaves, stems, and sometimes flowers are located in packages called buds. Buds are made of tough scales that form a waterproof case. In spring, sap rises from the roots to the branches; the scales fall off the buds; and the tree's leaves, stems, and flowers unfurl and grow. During the summer, the tree begins to develop new buds for the following year.

Discover how PLT can help you teach… from nature!

- Attend, host, or sponsor a local PLT workshop where participants receive PLT activity guides, ideas, and materials.
- Contact your PLT-Ohio State Coordinator: Sue Wintering, plt@dnr.state.oh.us, 614-265-6657

PLT® Ohio

Answers to word search: bark; branch; bud; flower; leaf; node; pith; sap; scales; scars; shoot; stem; thorn; twig.