



## U.P. Tree Identification Key

from Michigan State University Extension

**Website:** <http://forestry.msu.edu/msaf>

### Ever looked on the Internet for a way to identify a tree ?

I'll bet you didn't find one. But now you can! A tree identification key for the Upper Peninsula forests has been developed by MSU Extension. It is attached to the Michigan Society of American Foresters website and U.P. Forestry website maintained by the U.P. Tree Improvement Center in Escanaba.

The U.P. Tree Key website has **three different keys** that feature over **50 species**. Species description pages mention more than 75 species. **One key is for conifers and two keys for hardwoods**, a summer and a winter key. The idea with two hardwood keys is to provide the ability to identify trees without the leaves, as well as with the leaves. There are over **300 images and maps** on the website.

A "key" or "**dichotomous key**" is a series of paired descriptions. The sample you have will fit only one of the pair. With that choice, the key will direct you to another set of paired descriptions, where once again, you will need to make a choice. This process continues until one of the descriptions ends in a species name. You then look at a more detailed description of that species to determine whether or not you have followed the correct path. Keys can be fun as well as helpful.



This kind of identification tool requires **observation of various tree characteristics**, making this an excellent tool.

Some trees are fairly easy to identify, while others require more information and learning. Keys not only

help identify trees but they also help teach about trees and what makes them different.

In addition to the keys and descriptions, there are:

- range **maps**;
- species **abundance lists** for each county,
- an interactive **glossary**,
- a page on identification **characteristics**,
- and a couple of **taxonomy** lists.

The site is **cleverly linked** to provide ease of use for schools, forest owners, and anyone else



interested in identifying trees of the Upper Peninsula. The website was designed especially for classroom applications from the fourth grade and up. However, most fourth and fifth grade students will require coaching to teach them how to use the keys.

There have been several good image libraries available on the Internet for years but they require you to know what you have or what you're looking for. This is troublesome for people who want to identify a particular tree they don't already recognize.

**NEW! In September, 2000, a Michigan forest history module was added to the tree ID website. It is the first of several planned additions and was specifically requested by teachers. Check it out!**