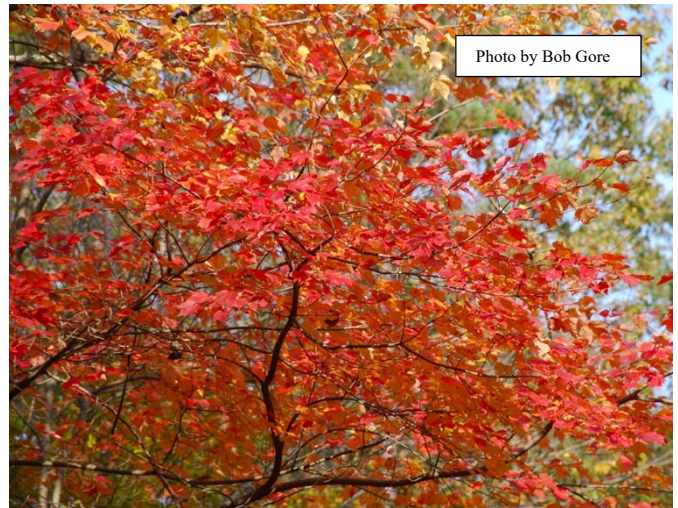


Autumn Leaves at Ivy Creek- A Little Naturalist Activity

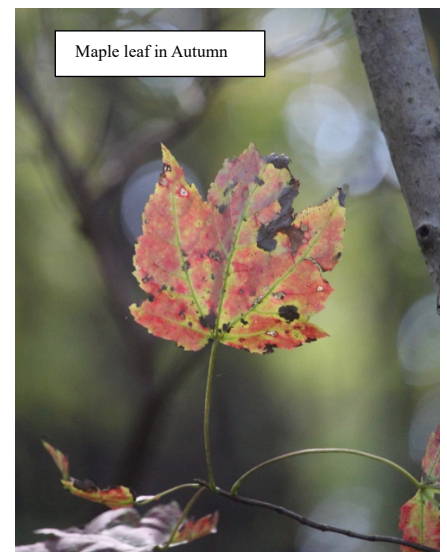
Created for use by the Ivy Creek Natural Area

Autumn is a wonderful time to visit the Ivy Creek Natural Area. The green leaves of the trees change color to red, yellow, brown, gold, orange, purple, and more. The woods look very different with all the beautiful new colors. Did you ever wonder why leaves turn colors in autumn?



In the spring and summer, the leaves are making a kind of sugar they use for food. Leaves need sunlight, water, and air to make the food. They also produce chlorophyll which is what makes them green and helps them use sunlight. The process of combining chlorophyll, sunlight, water and air to make food is called photosynthesis. Once the leaves produce the food, they will feed all the tree, helping it to grow.

When autumn comes, the weather changes. It is cooler and there is less sunlight. These changes tell the tree it is time to get ready for winter, a time when it will rest. The leaves stop making food and also don't make chlorophyll. The leaves change color. Some colors, like yellow were there all along but we could only see the green. Some other colors, like red, are produced because of the change in sunlight. Soon the leaves fall to the ground and decay or rot. They become rich dirt that continues to feed the tree in years to come. Some trees are easy to identify by their fall leaf colors such as yellow poplars and red maples. Many leaves have more than one color. Leaves also come in different sizes and shapes. Look for all these differences when you explore leaves at Ivy Creek.



Leaf Art

by Carolyn Long

Yellow and red and brown leaves litter the ground. Fall is Mike's favorite time of year. Colors are everywhere in the woods. Green, orange, and purple leaves hang from the trees. Fall leaves have more colors than a crayon box.



Mike collects the brightest leaves to make patterns on the ground. He loves the different sizes and shapes. Some leaves feel soft and bend while others are dry and break. The leaves are so much more than when they are green.

Mike knows his art will not last. Squirrels eat the nuts and berries that he adds. The wind blows the leaves away. Colorful leaves turn brown and curl. He likes the changes.

One day, Mike's teacher tells the class about a show where everyone will make an art project to share. Mike worries. His drawings never look right. He asks his mom if he has to make an art project.



"Mike, I think making art for the show could be fun," she says. "You like to make art with leaves in the woods. Maybe you could use them for the show."

"The leaves will dry and turn brown. The art won't last," he says. Then Mike thinks. "I can take a photo of the art."

“That's a great idea, Mike. I will help you print it out.”

Mike gets excited. He looks for the best leaves he can find. He places the leaves in a swirling pattern like they are still falling. The colors glow in the sunshine. Then he takes a photo. His mother makes a large print of the photo that Mike glues to a piece of cardboard. He signs his name.



Mike's Art Project/Carolyn Long

The next day is the art show. There are drawings and paintings and even clay models. When he gets home, Mike shows his mom a ribbon.

“Everyone liked my leaf art. I won “Best of Fall.”

Activities with Fall Leaves:

Leaf Art: Make fall leaf art like in the story. Collect a variety of leaves and make shapes and patterns with them on the ground. Add nuts, berries, sticks, and other natural objects you find. Watch how the art changes over time.



Leaf Rubbings: Collect different kinds of leaves. Place them on a smooth surface and put a thin sheet of white paper over them. Use the side of a crayon to rub gently over the paper and leaves. The outlines of the leaves will appear on the paper.

Leaf People: Find a bright leaf. Glue it to the top of a Popsicle stick or other stick. Cut out eyes, nose and mouth from paper and glue them to the leaf.



Books to read: *Autumn Leaves* by Ken Robbins

Fall Leaves by Liesbet Slegers

Hello Autumn by Shelley Rotner

Little Tree by Loren Long

Look What I Did With A Leaf by Morteza Sohi

The Reason for the Seasons by Gail Gibbons

I See Fall Leaves by Mari Schuh

All books are available at the local library: jmrl.org