

Key for Identifying Common Trees in Southern BC

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This key is developed to identify: Western redcedar, Western hemlock, Douglas-fir, Bigleaf maple, Douglas maple, Vine maple, Red alder and Black cottonwood.



Coniferous (ever green)?



Deciduous?
See next page!



Scale-like, concealing the twigs? twigs flattened?



Needle-like, not concealing the twigs?



Seed cones ellipsoid (egg-shaped), 1 cm long?



Needles Not in clusters?



Needles in clusters?



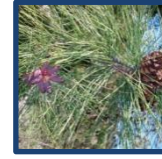
Mature trees' bark is grey, stringy, tearing off in long strips?



Needles stalked?



Needles stalkless?



some kind of pine trees



Western redcedar
(*Thuja plicata*)



Needles are nearly flat, GLOSSY, and soft? Yellowish-green on top, **whitish with 2 fine lines of stomata below?**



Needles are flat with a pointed tip? The needles appear to stand out around the twig? The lower surface is paler?



Some kind of fir trees (*Abies* family)



Seed cones are numerous, small (~2 cm long)? Cones are purplish-green when young and light brown when mature?



Cones are 5~11 cm long? Between each scale, long three-pronged bracts ("mouse bum") presented?



Dark brown to reddish-brown, becoming thick and strongly grooved with age?



Smooth, grey-brown when young? Becomes very thick and deeply grooved with dark reddish-brown ridges when aged?



Western hemlock
(*Tsuga heterophylla*)



Douglas-fir
(*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)



Deciduous?



leaves lobed and maple-like?



leaves unlobed?



big leaves, 15~30cm across?



Have only a few blunt, wavy teeth; are shiny, dark green on top and paler underneath; and turn yellow in the fall?



Small greenish-yellow flowers, about 3 millimeters across, appear early in spring, hanging in clusters at the ends of twigs?



The fruit consists of two winged seeds joined at the base. Seeds are hairy, 3 to 6 centimeters long?



Greyish-brown, shallowly grooved when older?



Bigleaf maple
(*Acer Macrophyllum*)



Smaller leaves, 6~11 cm in diameter?



Leaves divided into 3~5 lobes? Leaves coarsely toothed, dark green on top and greyish-green underneath?



The individual flowers are about 5 mm long and grow on short stalks within the cluster? There are five petals?



Cluster winged seeds? Joined in pairs at a sharp angle in a V-shape (<45°)?



The bark of a young tree is thin and smooth, but becomes checked and rough as the tree ages?



Douglas maple
(*Acer glabrum*)



Leaves have 7~9 triangular lobes; with sharp single or double teeth?



Bright purple or red flowers develop in drooping clusters? The flowers are on slender stalks and are approximately 12 mm across?



The wings of the seed are 2~4 cm long and the angles between them forms an almost straight line?



The smooth bark is marked by shallow crevices?



Vine maple
(*Acer circinatum*)

Smooth, coarsely to irregularly toothed, the teeth pointing outwards, leaf margins rolled under, brownish in the fall?



The flowers occur as either male or female clusters? Male flowers are in long, drooping, reddish catkins, and female flowers are in short, woody, brown cones?



The bark is thin, greenish on young trees, turning grey to whitish with age?



Red alder
(*Alnus rubra*)



Laves rounded to heart-shaped base and sharp-pointed tip? margin finely round-toothed?



Male and female catkins are on separate trees. Male catkins are small, 2 to 3 centimetres long and female catkins are larger, 8 to 20 centimetres long?



The bark is smooth, yellowish-grey on younger trees, but grows thick and deeply grooved with age?



The hairy capsules open to release seeds which are covered with white, fluffy hairs?



Black cottonwood
(*Populus trichocarpa*)

References list:

Pojar, J. and A. MacKinnon (eds.). 1994. Plants of Coastal British Columbia. B.C. Ministry of Forests and Lone Pine Publishing. Canada.

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