

# All About Conifers & Pinecones Activity



## At a Glance

Did someone say Christmas Trees? Discover some fun facts about conifers! Practice recognizing some conifers in your own neighborhood and get creative with some natural materials.

## Did you Know?

All living things have basic needs including trees. Trees are grouped into two categories: broad-leaf or coniferous. A broad-leaf tree is deciduous, meaning it loses its leaves or needles in the fall. Coniferous trees or evergreens have needles that remain on the branches year-round. Conifers will actually replace old needles with new ones, so the tree is never bare! Bald Cypress, Dawn Redwood and Larch are the exceptions to this rule. They are conifers, but they lose their needles in the fall, just like a deciduous tree.

## Conifers

A conifer is an evergreen tree with needles. The needles can hang on the branches as a clustered group, as a single needle, or as a scale-like leaf. There are more than 550 species of conifers that grow around the world, most preferring a temperate climate. Most coniferous trees grow cones which come in different sizes and are made up of small plates that we call scales. There are two types of cones. The female cone is usually larger in size and has seeds located on the inside of each scale. These female cones are the ones we usually call "pinecones", even if they do not actually come from a pine tree. The male cones are typically much smaller and contain pollen, which is carried by the wind from tree to tree. Examples of coniferous trees include Douglas firs (a common species used as a Christmas tree), cypresses, cedars, junipers, larches, pines, hemlocks, redwoods, spruces, and yews.

## Growing Conifers at Longwood Gardens

At Longwood, there are conifers located throughout the property. There is even an outdoor garden area called "Oak and Conifer Knoll". Many of the conifers covering the top of this area were planted during the 1930's, these include white pine, red pine, fir, cedar, juniper, spruce, sequoia, cypress, yew, arborvitae, hemlock, and two dawn redwoods

Fun Fact: Dawn Redwoods were once thought to be extinct!

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## Get Outside and Find Some Conifers

Below you will find a list of common conifers found in North America. Get outside and see if you can recognize any of these coniferous trees growing in your backyard or neighborhood. Collect pinecones as you search to use for the next activity.



Eastern White Pine  
*Pinus strobus*



White Fir  
*Abies concolor*



Norway Spruce  
*Picea abies*



Douglas-fir  
*Pseudotsuga menziesii*



Eastern Hemlock  
*Tsuga Canadensis*



Austrian Pine  
*Pinus nigra*

# All About Conifers & Pinecones Activity



## Materials:

- Dried seed pods (Milkweed, Sweet Gum)
- Hot glue gun with glue (need adult supervision)
- Leaves, sticks and pieces of bark
- Pinecones and evergreen branches
- Rocks
- Walnut shells
- Wiggly eyes
- Optional: fabric, clay, pipe cleaners, felt, feathers, beads, shells, and other craft materials

## Create a Critter

With a little imagination, create animals, insects, and other critters using natural materials. Search for trees that have dropped seed pods, leaves, and cones to create your critter.

## Directions:

1. Collect materials from the outdoors- dried materials work best. Look for sweet gum pods, maple seed pods, walnut shells, acorns, leaves, sticks, or pinecones.
2. Plug your glue gun in to warm up with adult supervision.
3. Begin sorting through your pieces of natural material to create a head, a body, legs, etc.
4. Glue the pieces in place.
5. Name your critter.

Optional: Once dried, place a piece of yarn around the critter to hang on a plant or tree.

