

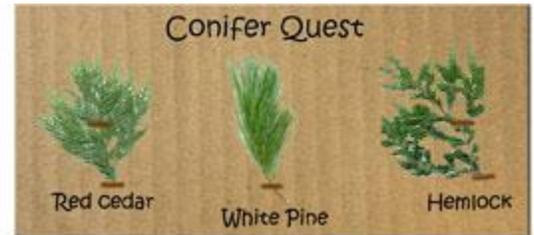
Backyard Wildlife Fun for Kids: Conifer Quest

(Adapted from National Wildlife Federation)

Questing for conifers can be a fun activity for anytime of the year! Conifers are plants that use cones to hold their seeds. Pines, spruces, hemlocks, cedars and firs are all conifers native to Maryland. Conifers can have small or large cones, some of which have prickles, so be careful! In addition, conifer leaves are usually flat and waxy to help prevent water loss. Some leaves, like those from cedars are scaly or braided along the twig while pines have long needles in bundles called fascicles.

Materials:

- Long piece of cardboard
- Marker
- Ruler
- Scissors or a hole punch
- Tree ID book (optional)
- Twist ties



To start out, find a long piece of cardboard to use for a conifer quest board. Take a marker and write 'Conifer Quest' at the top of the board. Punch two holes, a quarter inch apart every six inches down the center of the board. Put twist ties through the holes. Next, go exploring! When a conifer is found, take a small sprig and attach it to the board using the twist ties. Be sure to only grab small amounts of the tree and make sure to have permission to take parts of trees on other people's property. Feel free to attach any cones that might be found as well. Try to identify the trees using a book like Peterson's First Guide to Trees or by using a key online. Write the name of the tree under each sprig as well as a description of the tree such as what the needles look like and anything unique about the tree.



White pine (*Pinus strobus*) by Kerry Wixted