Sycamore bark collage and measurement activity

Sycamores shine on the banks of the St. Joseph River! Eastern Sycamore trees often grow in rich soils along riverbanks. They can grow to be very large, and have wide leaves with pointed lobes and blotchy bark. Look for their upper white branches “shining” along on a sunny day! Here are some activities to help you learn more about these magnificent trees!

**Ages** 4 and up, varies with activity

**Location** Create your collage at home. To measure a tree, search for a Sycamore growing in a park along the St. Joseph River. For example, St. Patrick’s County Park, on Laurel Road in South Bend has many Sycamore trees along the river and on the lane near the Manion Cabin.

### Bark Collage

**Materials Needed**
- Paper in shades of tan, gray, green
- White paper for background
- Glue stick

**Instructions**
- **Tear** the tan, gray and green paper into random shapes.
- **Glue** them onto the white paper. Be sure to leave some white showing through! If you don’t have construction paper or other colored paper handy, use tempera paints or crayons to color your bark pieces.
Measure a Sycamore Tree

Materials Needed

- A Sycamore tree
- Rope, yarn or twine
- Scissors
- Tape measure

Instructions

Hold the end of the twine about four feet off the ground against the trunk. Have a helper walk the twine all the way around the tree until it meets the end you are holding against the trunk. (Safety tip: If there is a vine climbing up the tree, find a different one to measure, since it may be Poison Ivy!)

Cut the twine where it meets the end.

Remove the twine from the tree and spread it out on the ground in a straight line. How many of your footsteps does it take to get from one end of the twine to the other?

Use a tape measure to measure the length of the twine as it lays on the ground. That measurement equals the circumference (the distance all the way around the trunk) of the sycamore. Can you find any trees nearby with smaller or larger circumferences?

Did You Know? As Sycamore trees age, they often become hollow in the center.

Want to Learn More?

The St. Joseph County (Indiana) champion Sycamore is a giant tree near The Grotto on the campus of the University of Notre Dame. Its circumference is 256 inches. That’s over 21 feet around! You can find more information about its measurements and other champion trees here: [http://www.sjcparks.org/DocumentCenter/View/3440/Big-Tree-Program--Awards-Brochure-PDF](http://www.sjcparks.org/DocumentCenter/View/3440/Big-Tree-Program--Awards-Brochure-PDF)

Watch a short video about Sycamore grain storage bins from Connor Prairie Living History Museum in Fishers, Indiana here: [https://fb.watch/3U7iBLYS0M/](https://fb.watch/3U7iBLYS0M/)