

Tree Guide to the Wabanaki Forest

The Wabanaki Forest

The Wabanaki forest—also referred to as the Acadian forest—spans the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and parts of New England. This unique forest type is an eco-region transition zone, boasting tree species found in both the boreal forest, to the north, and the hardwood forest, to the south. This beautiful mixed-wood forest supports a rich diversity of life and livelihoods.

With 32 native tree species, the Wabanaki forest is naturally diverse and resilient to natural disturbances. This guide will help you identify nine of the most common tree species found in the forest.



Eastern White Pine

Mi'kmaw: guow •Wolastoqey: kuwes

White pines have tall, straight trunks and long, feathery needles. Their needles come in bundles of five, whereas the needles on red pine and jack pine come in pairs.



Eastern Hemlock

Mi'kmaw: gsus'gw •Wolastoqey: ksiwsk

Hemlock needles are short and occupy a single plane. The needles also have a small peg where they attach to the twig. Hemlock branches are delicate, like lace.



American Beech

Mi'kmaw: suomusi •Wolastoqey: mihihqimus

The oval leaves of beech trees turn golden in fall and hang on through the winter. Beech trees have smooth, light grey bark, but can develop cankers when affected by beech bark disease.



Sugar Maple

Mi'kmaw: snawei •Wolastoqey: sonaw

Sugar maples have furrowed bark with deep cracks. Their leaves have five lobes and U-shaped margins, and they turn orange, yellow, or red in the fall. Closely observed, their buds look like short pyramids.



Red Maple

Mi'kmaw: malsnawei •Wolastoqey: sonaw

Red maple leaves have sharp V-shaped margins and red stems. In the fall, their leaves turn red as well.



Yellow Birch

Mi'kmaw: mnnoqon •Wolastoqey: mosson

Yellow birch is a long-lived species with golden bark, which shreds in small pieces. In contrast, white birch bark comes off in large sheets. Their twigs have a distinctive wintergreen flavour.



Red Spruce

Mi'kmaw: gawatgw •Wolastoqey: olonatoq

Red spruce have short, green needles with a hint of yellow that grow all the way around the twig. The branches of young red spruce tend to drape downwards. They have small cones compared to other spruce species.



White Spruce

Mi'kmaw: gawatgw •Wolastoqey: supatoq

White spruce can be distinguished from other spruce species by their bluish-green needles, which are longer than black or red spruce needles. Give them a sniff test—you'll find they have a pungent smell.



Balsam Fir

Mi'kmaw: stoqonaqsi •Wolastoqey: stahqon

Balsam fir have aromatic, flat green needles that grow spirally but rotate upwards onto a single plane. Their bark contains obvious blisters that are full of sticky resin.

The Wabanaki forest spans the traditional lands of the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, Pestomuhkati, Penawapskewi, and Abenaki Nations—the five nations that make up the Wabanaki Confederacy.

Members of the Wabanaki Confederacy signed Peace and Friendship Treaties with the British Crown prior to 1779. These treaties did not deal with the surrender of lands and resources, but in fact recognized Aboriginal title and established the rules for what was to be a respectful relationship between equal nations.