

Connecting Kids to Nature

Nature is a great teacher and getting kids outside to learn and play is good for their brains and their bodies. Try this outdoor activity from Project Learning Tree® - it's safe, fun, and educational!

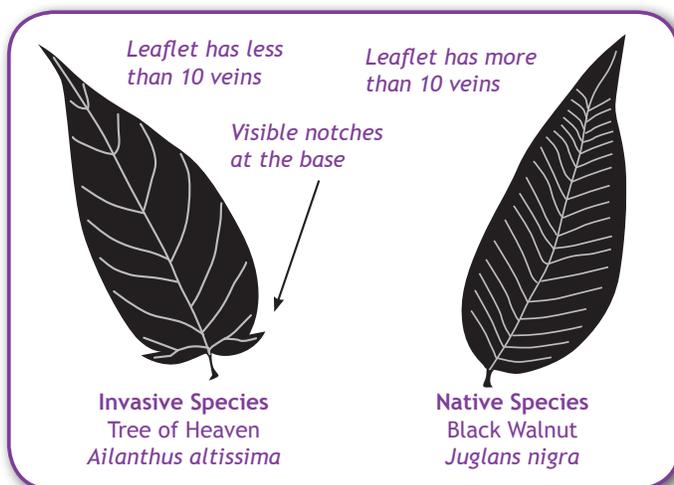
Invasive Species

Moving plant and animal species to new environments can be beneficial, but can often cause environmental and economic harm.

The next time you are outdoors, introduce the term **invasive species** to children and discuss its meaning by asking:

- How would this area look different if a family of elephants lived here?
- What impact would the elephants have on the plants and animals nearby?
- Where do elephants live in the wild? Why don't elephants live here?

Of course, elephants have not invaded woodlands of the United States, but invasive species are impacting local forest ecosystems. For example, Tree of Heaven (or *Ailanthus*) is an invasive plant originally from central China, now found in 30 U.S. states. It is often mistaken for the native Black Walnut and left to grow and reproduce. Tree of Heaven grows rapidly, is difficult to remove, and displaces native plants. Both species have **compound leaves**, but can you identify the differences between the leaflets?



Fill in the vowels to identify common characteristics of invasive species.

1. Have a short l_f__cycl__ and produce many __ffspr__ng
2. Gr__w very quickly
3. Are not affected by natural pr_d__t__rs in their new h__b__t__ts
4. Spr__ __d quickly and easily to new __c__syst__ms
- 5. Often t__l__r__t__ a wide range of different __nv__r__nm__nts

Make Learning Fun!

Encourage your child's school to incorporate learning outdoors.

For more activity ideas and materials:

- Attend a PLT workshop, www.plt.org/state-network/
- Visit shop.plt.org



Project Learning Tree®
(PLT) is an initiative
of the Sustainable
Forestry Initiative.

www.plt.org