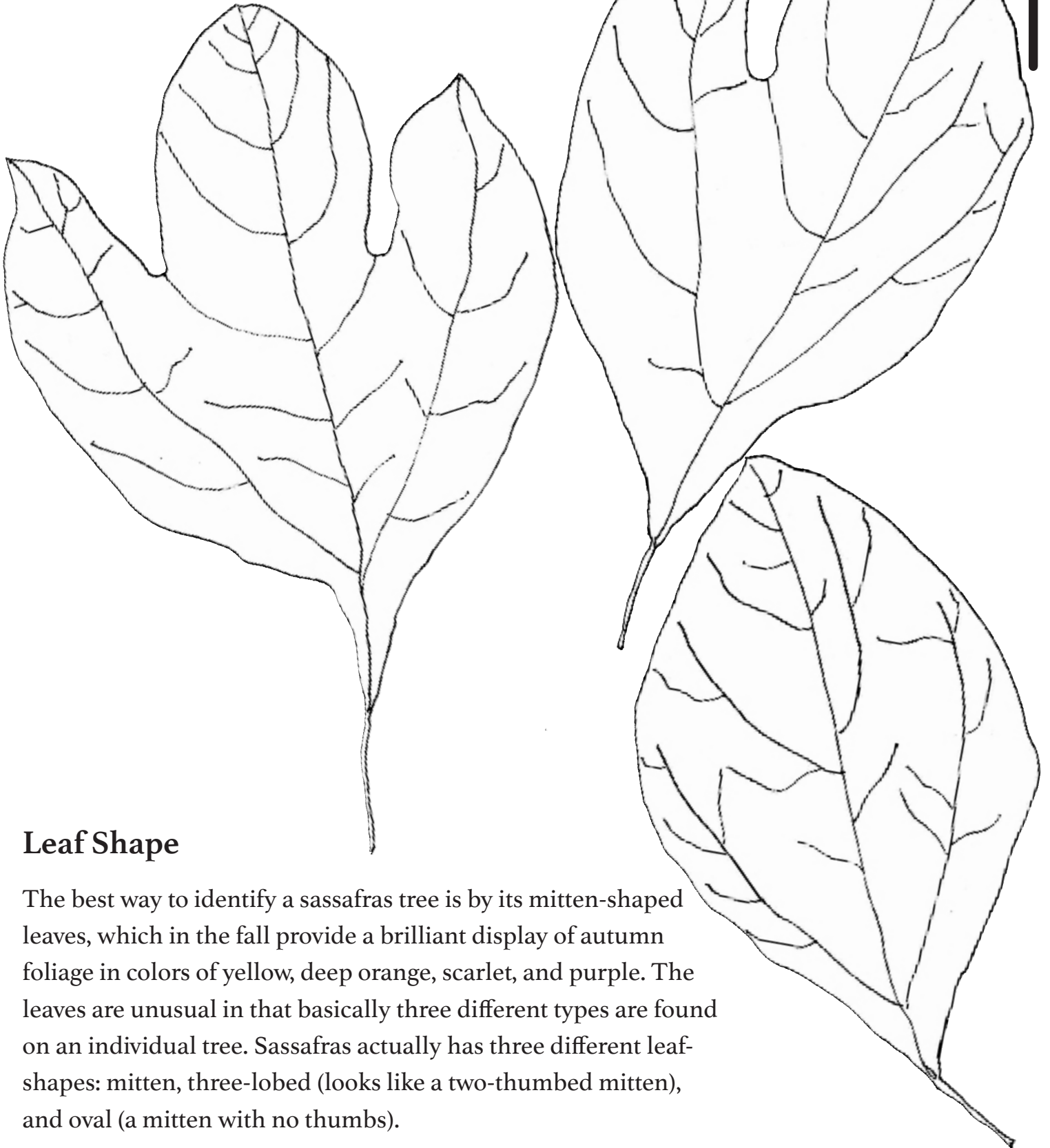


Sassafras

Sassafras albidum

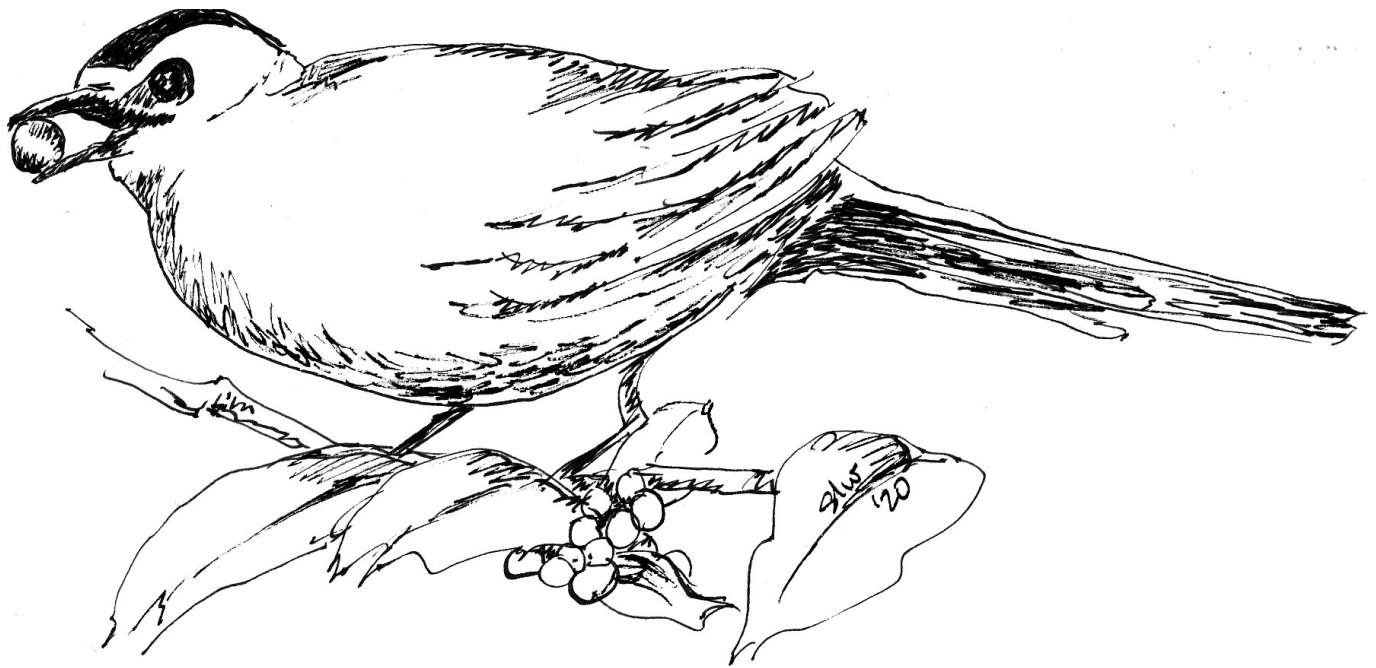


Leaf Shape

The best way to identify a sassafras tree is by its mitten-shaped leaves, which in the fall provide a brilliant display of autumn foliage in colors of yellow, deep orange, scarlet, and purple. The leaves are unusual in that basically three different types are found on an individual tree. Sassafras actually has three different leaf-shapes: mitten, three-lobed (looks like a two-thumbed mitten), and oval (a mitten with no thumbs).

Fruit

The fruits of sassafras resemble a small, dark blue cherry perched atop a red, stalk-like structure, reminiscent of the shape of a golf tee. Sassafras fruit is called a drupe. Drupes are fleshy fruit that usually contain a single seed. The 1/2" dark blue fruit is loved by a variety of birds in the fall, including bobwhite quail, eastern kingbirds, great crested flycatchers, phoebes, gray catbirds, northern flickers, pileated woodpeckers, downy woodpeckers, thrushes, vireos, and northern mockingbirds.



Native Tree

Sassafras is a native tree, common to the eastern half of the United States. It is a member of the Laurel family. When the bark of the roots is crushed or scraped, it can smell like root beer, cinnamon, or black licorice. The oils distilled from sassafras have been used as an ingredient in candies, medicines, soft drinks, and as a perfume in soaps. Native Americans and early European settlers believed that sassafras roots could treat fevers, headaches, and colds.

Art Activity - Create a Sassafras Mobile

Color the sassafras leaves. Cut out the leaves. Punch a hole in each leaf. Thread string through the leaves. Hang up in a window. Enjoy.