

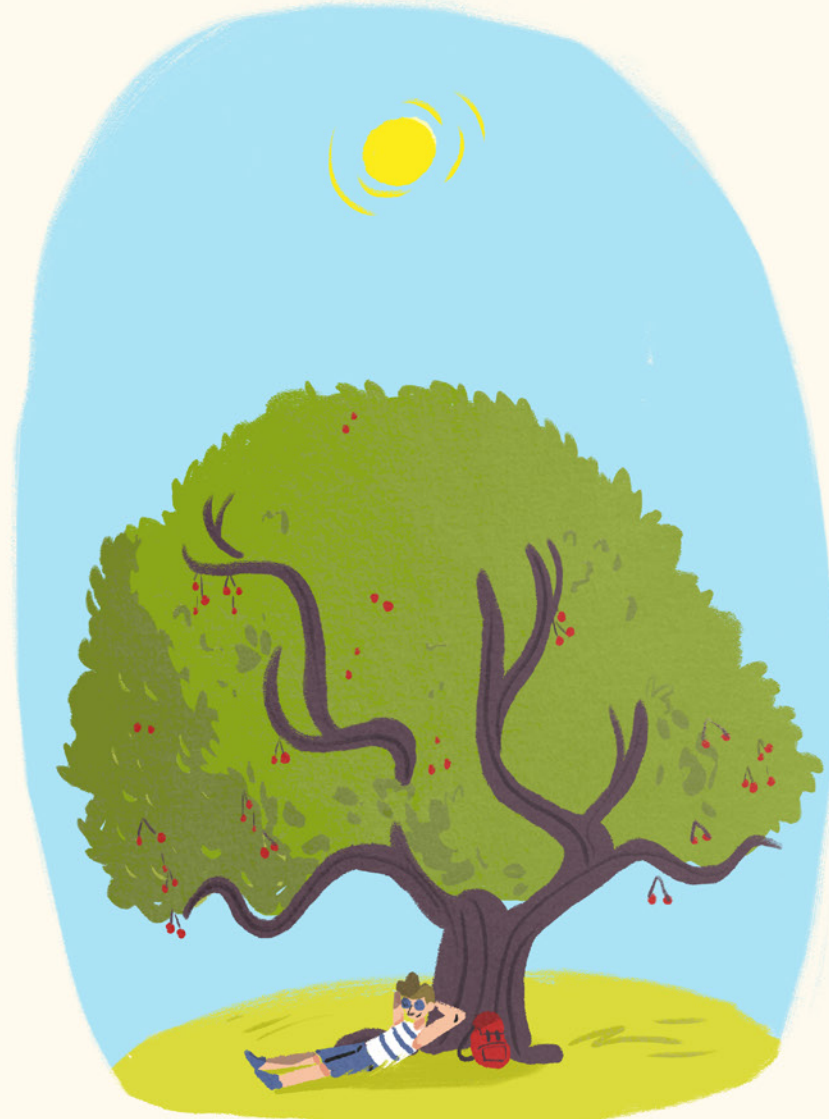
A Year in the Life of a Tree

Some trees change with the seasons: in spring, they grow fresh leaves and flowers called blossom. In summer, their branches are full of leaves, fruits, nuts, berries, and seeds. In fall, their leaves drop to the ground, and in winter, the branches are bare. This type of tree is called deciduous. Trees in the tropics often grow all year round. This is because there are only dry seasons and rainy seasons—it is always warm and humid. This is why tropical trees often have no growth rings.



Spring

Springtime is a season of epic growth. Each year, trees grow more wood around their trunks and branches, making them wider. This forms rings in the trunks, which can only be seen if the tree is cut down. In spring, buds that formed the previous year open up as the weather gets warmer, producing new leaves and flowers.



Summer

In summer, deciduous trees are covered in leaves, ripe fruits, nuts, and seeds that feed wildlife. During this season, they also make and store most of their own food ready for winter using photosynthesis. They take in water from the soil and carbon dioxide from the air. Using sunlight and a green pigment (color) called chlorophyll in their leaves, they make their food and release oxygen.



Fall

In fall the days become shorter, so there is less sunlight. This means that trees make less chlorophyll, so their green leaves turn orange, yellow, and red. Eventually the leaves fall to the ground, creating a crunchy carpet. These fallen leaves will decompose (break down) and help form a new layer of soil.



Winter

In winter, deciduous trees look bare without their leaves but they are still alive. Most of trees' nutrients are stored in their roots, which continue to grow slowly underground. Some trees still have berries in winter, which hungry birds can feed on. Over the cold months, trees rest quietly, waiting for spring to come again.

DID YOU KNOW?

Even in winter, some trees keep their leaves. Evergreen trees, like pine and fir, have special leaves that look like needles. These leaves need less food and water, so they stay green and on the tree all year round (see page 22).