

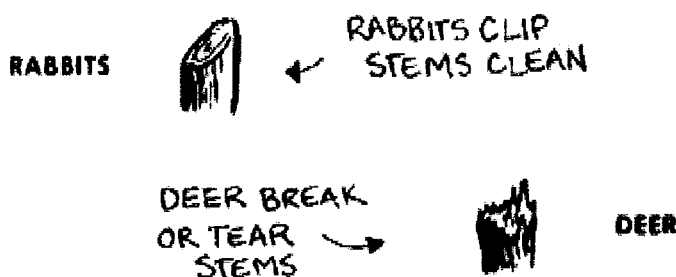


## Forest Foods Deer Eat

The white-tailed deer is our most popular game animal, enjoyed by 700,000 Michigan hunters and countless others interested in photographing or simply viewing these animals. As a hunter trying to optimize the chance of success or a landowner wishing to improve land for deer, you should be observant of deer activity and learn to identify the foods on which deer depend.

Food sources available in the fall, winter, and early spring are most critical to deer because they affect body condition, winter survival, and reproduction. During these seasons, deer browse on the leaves, needles, buds, and twig ends of trees and shrubs. Studies by wildlife biologists indicate deer prefer particular plants and dislike or will not eat others at least not until the preferred foods are no longer available,

This guide is designed to help you identify some woody plants of high, moderate, and low importance to deer. By learning to "key" in on areas with preferred foods and with signs of browsing, you can enhance your chances of seeing deer. Remember, look for browsed vegetation from ground level to about five feet in height. Rabbits also browse low twigs, but use by the two species can be distinguished easily.

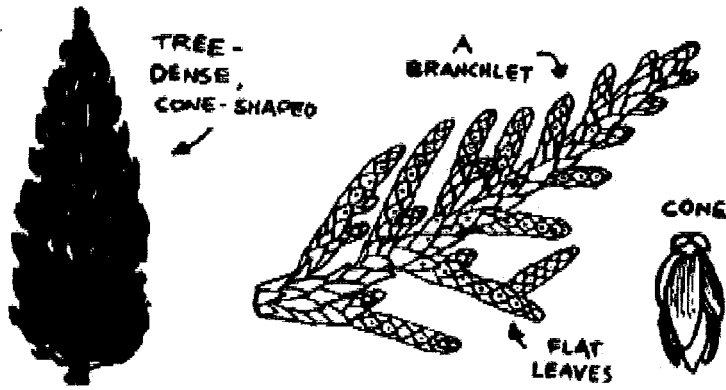


Woodlands are dynamic, changing from year to year. As trees grow, a maturing forest provides far less food than its previous young, brushy phase which occurred shortly after logging. What you remember as good deer habitat 15 years ago is probably poor habitat today. Use this guide to determine the feeding conditions at your favorite deer hunting or viewing area.

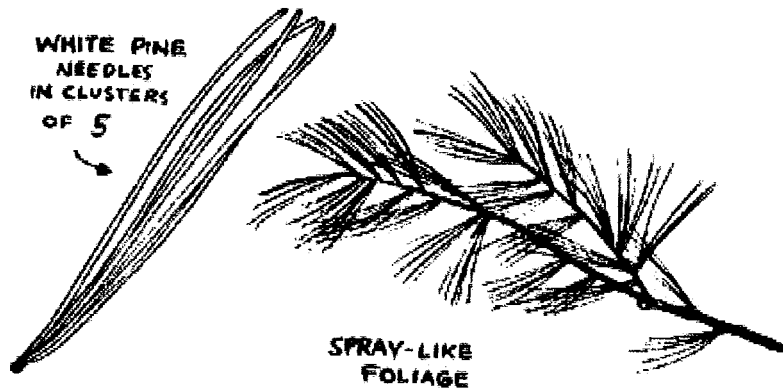
### Preferred Deer Foods

**White Cedar (Arbor Vitae)** - Evergreen with flat scalelike "leaves." Some varieties used for ornamental shrubbery. A swamp tree but it

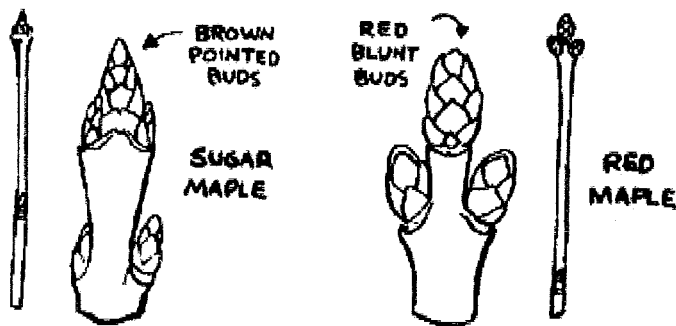
can grow on moist upland. In many areas browsing deer have eaten practically all cedar within reach.



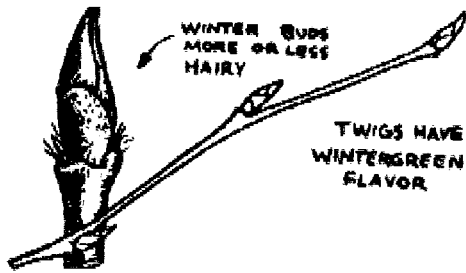
**White Pine** - The only Michigan pine with five needles in a cluster. Young trees have smooth dark green bark. Deer will eat white pine before they take other pines.



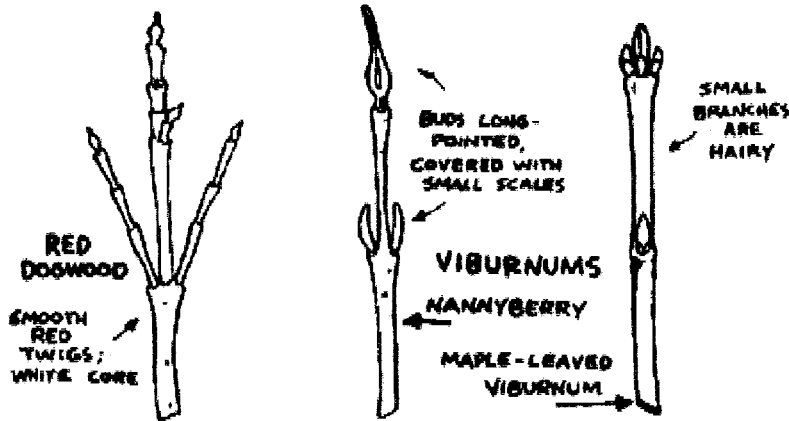
**Maples** - Trees with buds opposite each other. Sugar maple has brownish or gray twigs with brown pointed buds. Red maple has red twigs and reddish rounded buds and is better deer food.



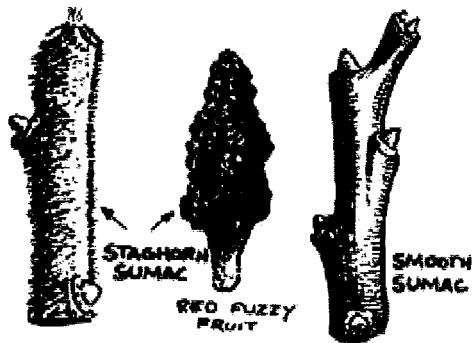
**Yellow Birch** - The bark of young tree, and twigs is brownish turning yellowish-gray and curling up when older. Pointed buds. Twigs taste like wintergreen. Young yellow birch looks like ironwood (a poor deer food), but ironwood has no wintergreen taste.



**Dogwoods and Viburnums** - Shrubs that generally have opposite buds like maples. Red dogwood has bright red twigs. Other species have reddish green, brown, or gray twigs. Viburnum buds are many different shapes.

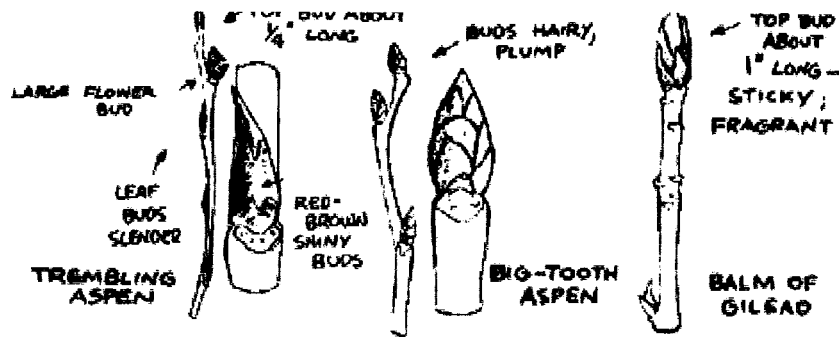


**Sumac** - Shrub commonly found in old fields and forest openings. Heavy, stiff, brown twigs and branches. One kind is fuzzy and resembles antlers in velvet. Another kind is smooth. Bunches of fuzzy red fruit at the top of all sumac plants.

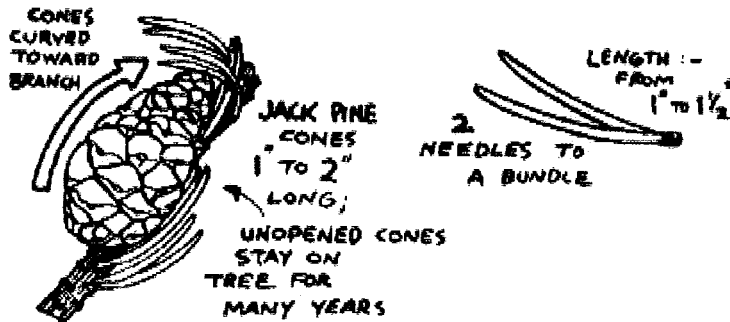


### Medium Quality Foods

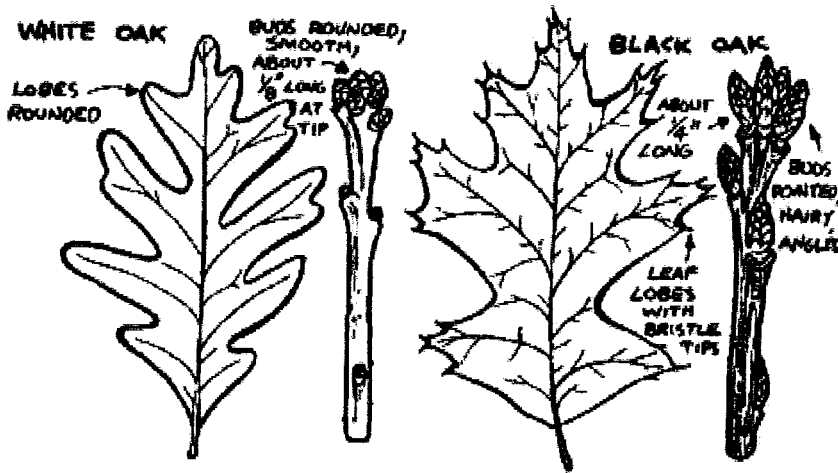
**Aspen** - This tree is, also called "popple" or "poplar" and is one of the most common Michigan trees. Trembling aspen has whitish, greenish gray bark and long pointed shiny buds Big toothed aspen has yellow green bark and fatter, fuzzy buds. Balm of Gilead (a poor deer food) looks similar, but has gray-green bark with bin sticky end buds and grows in wet areas.



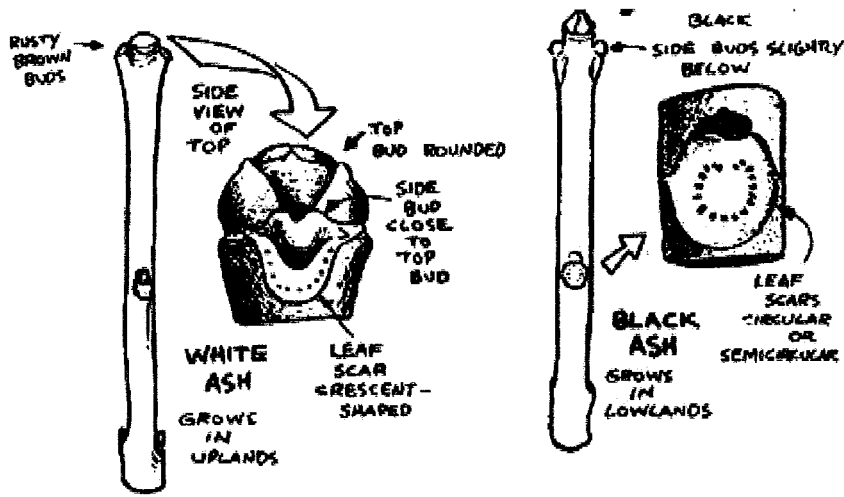
**Jack Pine** - A small needled tree. Needles, 2 in a bundle are 1 to 1 1/2 inches long. Young stands provide good winter cover, but only fair deer food.



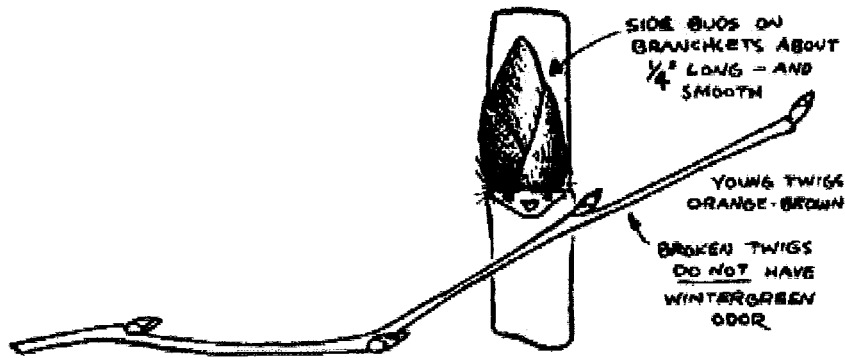
**Oaks** - Buds at ends of twigs are clustered and only moderate in food value, but acorns provide excellent deer food.



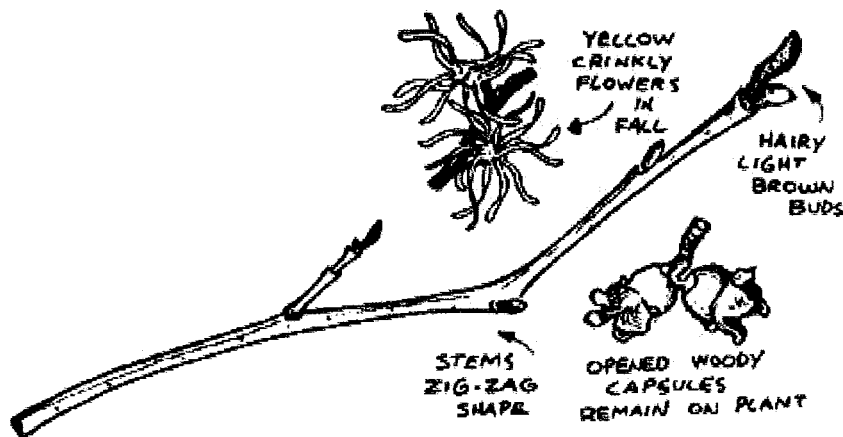
**Ash** - Green to light brownish gray, stiff, smooth stems with opposite, dark brown and black buds. Side buds close to end bud. Black ash is a swamp species. White ash prefers upland sites.



**White Birch** - This is the common "paper" or "canoe" birch. Bark on young stems is a shiny orange brown color that gradually turns white and "papery."

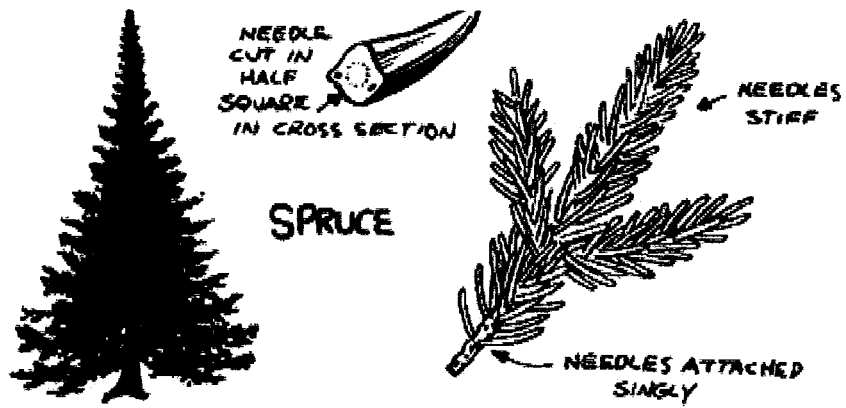


**Witch-Hazel** - Look for the unusual-shaped light brown buds. Yellow crinkly flowers can be seen in the fall along the stems.

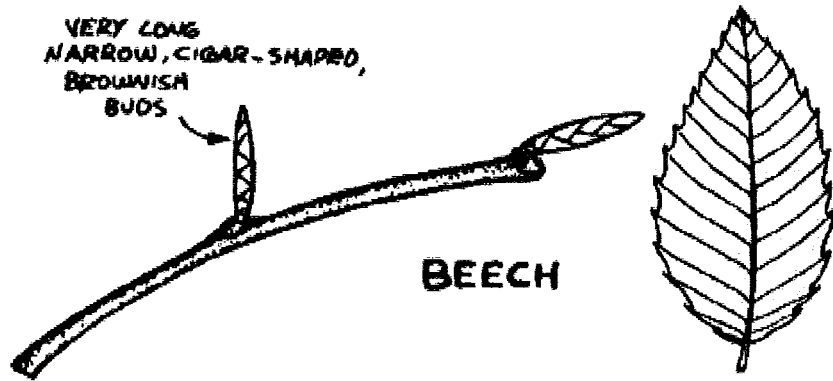


### "Starvation" Deer Foods

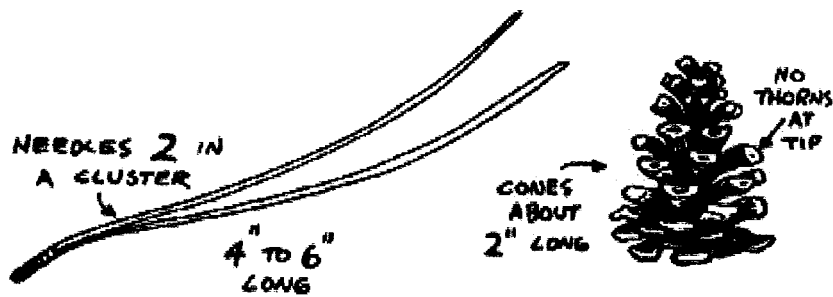
**Spruce** - Conical evergreen with stiff, sharp, 4 sided needles. Buds are not sticky. Deer will eat spruce only as last resort.



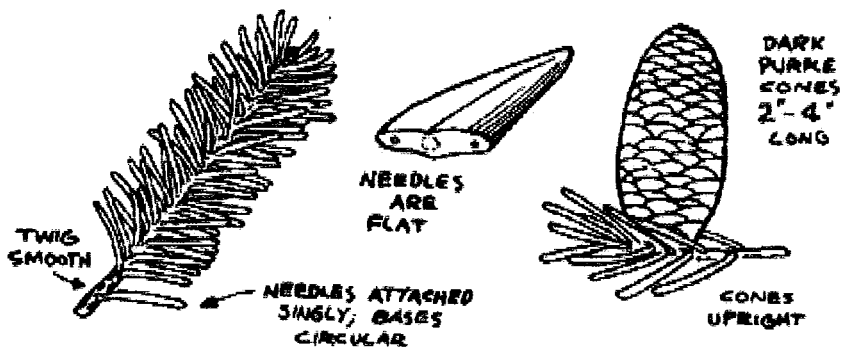
**Beech** - Light gray smooth bark. Long pointed buds. Leaves may stay on till spring.



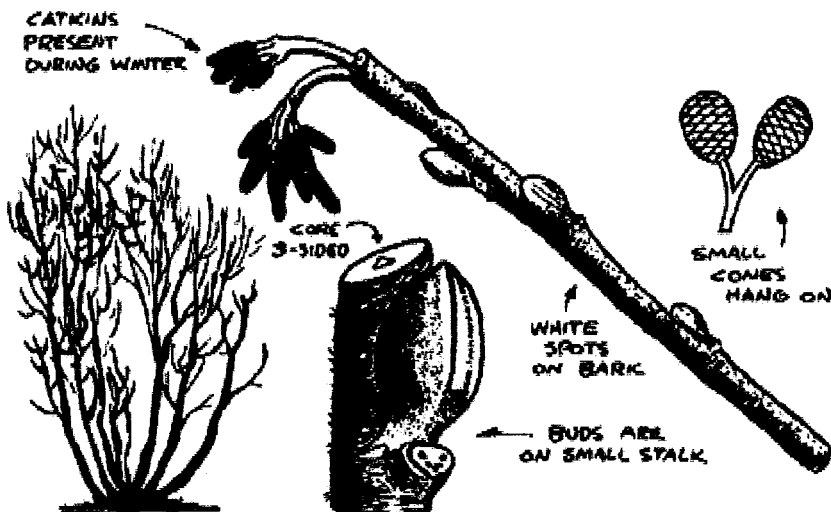
**Red Pine** - Needles 2 in a cluster, 4 to 6 inches long. Michigan's longest needled pine and a tree that has very little food value for deer.



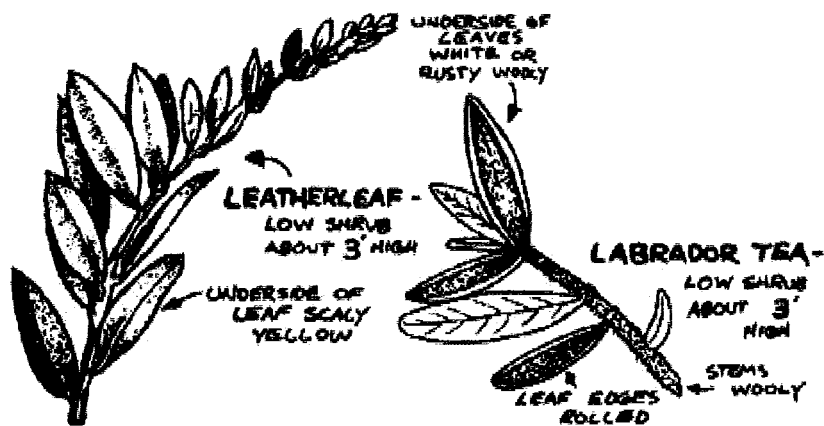
**Balsam Fir** - Evergreen with flat needles, 3/4" to 1 inch long. Smooth dark green bark with resin "blisters." Sticky buds at ends of twigs. A swamp species also found on moist uplands.



**Ray Alder** - A large shrub growing in wet places. Dark greenish brown stems covered with spots. Buds on short stalks. Catkins or "cones" may be present in the fall.



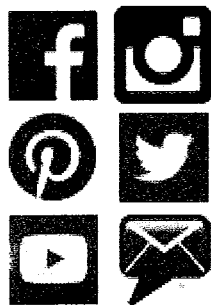
**Leather Leaf** - A bog shrub broadleaf evergreen. Under sides of leaves are rough. Labrador Tea (a better deer food) is found in the same places and its stems and the bottoms of its leaves are covered with a rusty "wool."



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