Leaf Classification

Though it is easier to identify most plants from their flowers or fruits, some plants can easily be identified by their leaves. To identify a plant based on its leaves, you must recognize the diversity of leaf types and know the terminology for different leaf patterns, shapes and arrangements.

Simple leaf pattern

Simple leaves are whole, undivided leaves growing from a bud on the stem. The node is the part of the stem where leaves are attached.

Compound leaf patterns

Compound leaves are divided into leaflets, growing from one axillary bud on the stem.
Compound leaf patterns continued…

Leaf arrangement

Nodes can have one leaf or many leaves, often in the following arrangements:

Alternate  (one leaf/node)  Opposite  (two leaves/node)  Whorled  (three or more leaves/node)
**Basic leaf shapes**

- Ovate (widest near base)
- Obovate (widest near apex)
- Elliptic (widest near middle)
- Oblong (parallel sided)

**Leaf margins**

- Entire
- Lobbed
- Dentate
- Serrate
- Compound
- Erose
- Crenate