

# Lichen Hunt

## Year-Round Activity for all Ages

Lichens are made up of two tiny living things: a fungus and an alga. The fungus and the alga benefit from living together. The alga produces "food" from the process of photosynthesis, and the fungus gathers water and minerals. Lichen can survive cold weather that would kill a fungus or an alga growing alone. Lichen is a symbiotic relationship.

Lichens grows in most parts of the world. There are a least 17,000 different types. Lichens can thrive where few plants can survive. They are found in deserts, near mountain peaks, and in the Arctic and Antarctic. They grow on dead wood, brick walls, metal, stones, tree trunks, and on the ground.

Most lichens are around 0.25 inch (6 millimeters) in height, but some can grow out to cover several feet. Many lichens look like flat, crusty blotches. Some look leafy. Some hang down in strands. Others have stalks and resemble miniature forests. Lichens come in many colours with brown, grey, and orange being common.

Lichens are eaten by some mammals including humans. Many lichens are used to make dyes, medicines, perfume, preservatives and antibiotics.

7 to 8 percent of the Earth is covered in lichens! Even in winter if the temperature rises about zero lichens will start to grow!

Finding lichens can be a good indication that the air is clean. As lichens have no roots or protective cover, they cannot filter what they absorb and so they are sensitive to pollution.

Lichens were among the first plants to live on land. Starting 500 million years ago!

Any time of year is a good time to look for lichen!

### Can you identify any of the common Lichen of the Kawarthas?

Head outside. If you have a magnifier glass, bring it along for viewing. Lichen is everywhere both in the city and natural areas. Below is a common list of lichens in the Kawarthas. What lichen can you find? How many species? How many colors?

Have fun!



**Fluffy Dust Lichen on base of a maple**



**Common Greenshield Lichen**



**A species of rock tripe**



**A species of cinder lichen on a snow-covered rock**

Photography by Drew Monkman





**A beard lichen on a spruce tree**



**British Soldiers**



**Green Reindeer Lichen**



**Trumpet Lichen**

Photography by Drew Monkman



**Yellow Fairy Cups**



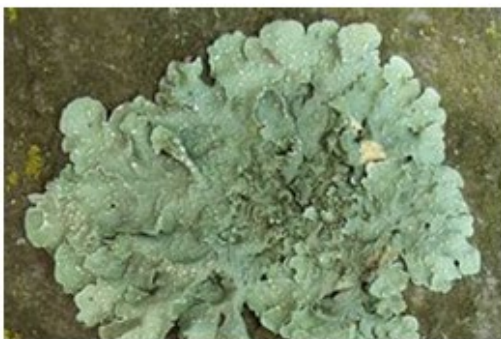
**Poplar Sunburst Lichens**



**Candleflame Lichen**



**Star-tipped Reindeer Lichen**



**Speckled Greenshield**



**Powdery Axil-bristle Lichen**





**Mapledust Lichen**



**Hooded Sunburst Lichen**



**Boreal Oakmoss**



**Bristly Beard Lichen**



**Eastern Speckled Shield Lichen**



**Ruffled Freckled Pelt Lichen**



**Hidden Goldspeck Lichen**



**Sea Storm Lichen**



**Common Sunburst Lichen**



**Shield Lichen**



**Grey Reindeer Lichen**

## Curriculum Links

**Grade 1 Life Systems** 3.0 Basic needs and characteristics of plants

**Grade 2 Understanding Air and Space Systems** 3.0 understand how air and water are used by living things. 3.3 describe ways in which things, including humans, depend on air and water 2.0 similarities and

differences in plants 2.2 Parts of plants **Grade 3 Understanding Life**

**Systems** 3.1 Needs of Plants 3.4 How plants get energy from the sun

3.8 Threat to plants **Grade 4 Life Systems** 2.3 plants and animals and

dependence on habitats **Grade 5 Science and Technology** 1.1 Bio

diversity **Grade 6 Science and Technology** 1.0 Human impact on

biodiversity **Grade 7 Science and Technology** 3.1 demonstrate an

understanding of an ecosystem.