

## The Forest for the Trees

This course will explore the science behind the new understanding of how trees live whether alone or in a forest. The focus will be on how trees communicate with each other, warn of attacks by insects, help each other in a forest, and survive the many stresses they experience.

New research has totally changed our understanding of trees: what they are able to perceive, and the responses they are able to make to threats such as drought, fire, and predation. We will investigate the social interactions of the “wood wide web” and how the web works. Lecture and discussion will consider several questions: are trees intelligent or just aware? Are they social beings? How do individuals communicate in the forest? Do trees take care of their young? Do different species help each other? Can a forest be considered a super organism?

The class is based on *The Hidden Life of Trees: What they Feel, How They Communicate—Discoveries from a Secret World (2017)* by Peter Wohlleben. {This is not the illustrated edition, which has a different organization.} There will also be other readings supplied by the instructor. During the six-week session, we will consider the evolution of trees; the confusing claims for oldest tree and largest tree; trees’ awareness of and responses to threats; and the diverse strategies that enable trees to reproduce and seedlings to survive. There will be one or possibly two field trips to forest preserves in the Princeton area.

**Leader:** Kay Widmer is an award-winning science teacher who specialized in ecology and environmental issues and has taught science at all grade levels.

**Tuesdays:** 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., 6 weeks: September 24 through October 29

**Location:** Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville, Maximum 16 seats