

# Clubmoss

## Identification Cards

### Background

Clubmosses are primitive plants. This means they do not have flowers or seeds, but reproduce through spores. Clubmosses are evergreen, so they can be found and identified all year. They are short plants, and a lot of them are trailing, or long and low like a ground-clinging vine. Historically, people used clubmosses for Christmas decorations, and the spores, which are quite flammable, were used in firework production. Eight species of clubmosses live in West Virginia. Here we will look at the most common four: two that grow statewide, and two that live in the mountains.

### Objectives

Children become budding botanists, having fun hiking to find clubmosses, or looking for them in the yard or a local natural area. They learn identification, habitat, size estimation, and map skills.

### Method

Children cut out and use the Clubmoss cards to find and identify common species. They also measure plant equivalents.

### Materials

Clubmoss Cards, ruler, pencil, journal (optional).

### What to do

1. Cut out and read the Clubmoss cards together. Look at the map of West Virginia on the card. Figure out which species are found in your area. Find objects that are about the same length of each species. Note on each card (or in your journal) the object you found that matches the plant in length.
2. Go out in the yard and look for clubmosses. Note where each plant species was found on the cards (or in your journal). Note the other interesting things you found while looking.
3. Go on a hike nearby (a walk if you live in the city) and look for more species. Note the ones that you find in your journal. Note the other things you notice while looking: temperature, weather, sounds, smells and sights.
4. For more clubmoss fun, check out this children's book:  
Ferns, Mosses & other Spore-producing Plants (Kingdom Classifications)  
by Steve Parker.

*Information compiled by Karen McClure*

# Common Clubmoss



*Lycopodium clavatum*

**Height:** 3 to 10 inches

**Leaves:** Tipped with a fine hair

**Branch width:** 1/8 inch

**Spores:** On fork-shaped growths that grow from the top of some branches

**Growth pattern:** Trailing

**Habitat:** Woods and swamps

**Range:** Grant, Mineral, Monongalia, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Randolph, Tucker, Upshur and Webster counties

**Note:** Native Americans made a tea of the plant to treat pain, fever and weakness. In the old days, the spores were used to treat diarrhea, dysentery, gas and rheumatism. The spores were also used as a diuretic and to stop bleeding. The spores were used in medicinal powders for baby chafing, tangled or matted hair with parasites and strep rashes.

**WARNING:** This plant contains a toxic alkaloid.



# Shining Clubmoss



*Huperzia lucidula*

**Height:** 4 to 10 inches

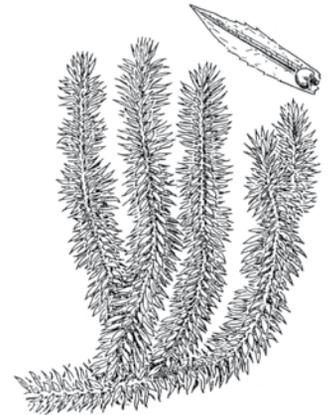
**Leaf length:** 1/4 to 1/2 inch

**Spores:** At the base of each leaf

**Growth pattern:** Trailing

**Habitat:** Cool, moist woods

**Range:** Statewide



# Groundpine



*Lycopodium digitatum*

This clubmoss is also called ground cedar, because it resembles red cedar trees on the ground

**Height:** 1 to 2 1/2 inches

**Leaves:** Tiny leaves press against the stems

**Spores:** On fork-shaped growths that are taller than the rest of the plant

**Growth pattern:** Trailing

**Habitat:** Dry woods to open fields

**Range:** Statewide



# Tree Clubmoss



*Lycopodium dendroideum*

**Height:** 4 to 12 inches

**Leaves:** Tiny leaves stick out from all around the stem

**Spores:** On two tall skinny cones at top of "tree"

**Growth pattern:** Erect (main stem underground)

**Habitat:** Moist, rich woods

**Range:** Fayette, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hardy, McDowell, Monongalia, Nicholas, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Preston, Raleigh, Randolph, Tucker, and Upshur counties



## Shining Clubmoss

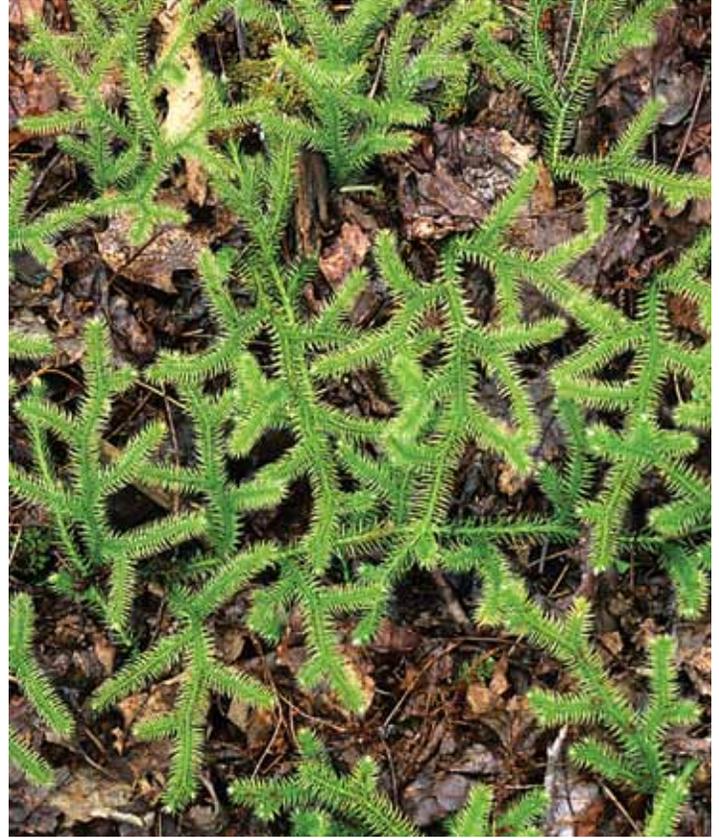
*Huperzia lucidula*



Karen McClure/W DNR

## Common Clubmoss

*Lycopodium clavatum*



Bill Beatty

## Tree Clubmoss

*Lycopodium dendroideum*



Bill Beatty

## Groundpine

*Lycopodium digitatum*



P.J. Harmon / W DNR