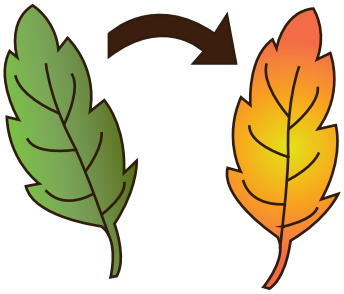
Find Out Why Leaves Change Color

Chlorophyll is a substance found in all leaves. It allows the leaves of the plant to photosynthesize, which is when they make energy from sunlight. Chlorophyll is green, and it hides the other colored pigments that are in leaves. In the fall, chlorophyll breaks down because there's not enough sunlight to perform photosynthesis. When the chlorophyll breaks down, the other pigments in the leaves start to show.



The mix of pigments in a leaf may be separated into bands of color. We can see this same effect by doing a *chromatography* experiment. Chromatography involves the separation of mixtures into individual components. By "absorption" and "capillarity," separation can take place. The paper holds the substances using absorption, while capillarity pulls the substances up the paper at different rates. Pigments are separated on the paper and show up as colored streaks or bands.