

January 2019

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS



Foraging for Pine Needles
(and what to do with them!)

How Nature Keeps Us
Happy & Healthy

Wild plant identification
pages to collect & color

10 Fun Ways to Study Nature
this month --no matter where you live

Seasonal poems, activities,
nature journal pages and more!

From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Welcome to the first issue of Wild kids!

Wild Kids magazine was created to help teach kids and their grown ups about nature and all the ways it's awesome. Every month, you'll learn about a different wild plant that you can forage and how to use it. We'll also share seasonal ways to get out in nature, botanical coloring pages, nature-based crafts and activities, nature-based poems, weather facts and lots more.

You can print Wild Kids Magazine or you can read it with your kids online. We'll always include printable pages like nature journal pages and collectible foraging coloring pages, so you may want to print out those sections even if you read the rest online.

We know that people live in all kinds of places with all kinds of weather and types of nature, so we'll try to offer stuff that will be helpful for as many families as possible. Please drop me a line if there's something in particular you'd like to see!

~Alicia

Why is Wild Kids free?

Kids (and their grown ups) need nature, and nature needs us! Our family believes in the importance of sharing & helping each other, and of passing on skills to help our world and each other. As long as we are able, we plan to produce Wild Kids to help do this for families who find it useful.

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Find lots more links, information and fun to accompany this month's themes at
www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids.

Get Wild in January

10 Ways to Learn and Play in Nature this Month

START A
WEATHER TREE
(WE'VE INCLUDED
ONE IN THIS
ISSUE!)

DO A PHOTO
CHALLENGE & TAKE
A NATURE PHOTO
EVERY DAY

ORDER SEED
CATALOGS AND
PLAN A SPRING
GARDEN

LOOK FOR
THE WINTER
CONSTELLATIONS

GET SOME
FORAGING
BOOKS FROM
THE LIBRARY

SPROUT SOME
GROCERY SCRAPS IN
JARS OF WATER
(LIKE CELERY OR
CHIVES)

RECORD THE
HIGH AND LOW
TEMPERATURES
EACH DAY

FEED THE
BIRDS & KEEP
A LIST OF WHO
VISITS

MAKE PINE
NEEDLE TEA
(SEE THE RECIPE IN
THIS ISSUE)

GATHER SOME
NATURAL ITEMS
FROM OUTSIDE
FOR YOUR
NATURE TABLE

HOW NATURE KEEPS US HAPPY & HEALTHY

Have you had your Vitamin N today?

Scientists are beginning to learn that we need nature the way we need other important things like vitamins, minerals, sleep and exercise. In fact, studies have shown that time in nature reduces children's allergies, improves our moods, prevents diseases, helps us heal faster, and more.

For example, a recent study in Finland found that kids who grow up in more rural environments are less likely to develop allergies. Researchers think that it might be because environments with lots of different species have more friendly bacteria that protect us against inflammatory disorders.



"We are proposing that contact of people, particularly children, with the natural environment and biodiversity could be really important for the development of the immune system."

~ Ilkka Hanski, ecologist at the University of Helsinki and lead author of the study.

For the study, scientists were researching the "biodiversity hypothesis," a theory that the decline in biodiversity in nature and our decreasing contact with it is contributing to the rise in chronic inflammatory and autoimmune diseases. They investigated the microbial diversity of teenagers who had lived in the same houses their whole lives in all different kinds of communities in eastern Finland.

After the scientists accounted for other factors like whether family members smoked and whether the kids had pets, they still found that the more forest and farm land the kids were near, the fewer allergies they had.

The scientists also found that the more different kinds of plants the kids had in their yards, the healthier they were. The number of species of a certain group of uncommon native plants was 25% higher in the yards of teens who had no allergies than those with allergies. The allergy-free kids also had many more microbial species (healthy bacteria) on their skin, especially a group of bacteria called gammaproteobacteria. We know that healthy bacteria are important for health (that's why yogurt and other fermented foods are so good for us) but we're just now learning how important they are. One kind of beneficial bacteria that's often found in soil, acinetobacter, has been linked to higher levels of anti-inflammatory components in the blood of healthy people, meaning these bacteria may be helping their immune systems ignore allergens.

Hanski says the diversity of microbes around us also influences other diseases like type 1 diabetes, asthma, and even depression.

Some scientists are already trying to find ways to breed these friendly microbes to try to market a product for people to rub onto their skin to stay healthy.

It's a lot easier to just get outside!

Foraging 101

Foraging for wild edible and medicinal plants is great for us in many ways, but it's important to follow some basic rules. Here's how to forage responsibly.

Always be 100% sure what you're foraging. It's best to bring an experienced forager with you, but if you can't do that then use a trusted ID guide (preferably a couple of them). Remember to always look at all the parts of a plant for proper identification, and how to tell it apart from lookalikes.

Always get permission. If you're foraging on public lands, find out what the rules are. Lots of parks allow you to gather all the fruits and mushrooms that you want (for personal use, not to sell) but don't let you dig up roots or harvest leaves, for instance. If it's private land, get permission from the landowner. Many people are happy to let you gather wild plants on their property, especially if you thank them with some baked goods you made with the bounty afterwards!

Stay safe. Know how to spot troublesome plants like poison oak and poison ivy. Wear long sleeves and long pants, and use gloves if foraging for plants like raspberries or stinging nettle. Avoid foraging in polluted areas, near busy roadways, or where pesticides may have been sprayed.

Don't over-harvest (unless it's an invasive plant). Only take as much as you can use, and try to leave most of the patch so it will be around for many years. Remember that wildlife may rely on that food too, and other foragers may be harvesting it. Learn about how to forage responsibly so the plants will be there for years to come. On the other hand, some wild plants like garlic mustard and dandelions are considered invasive and it helps the other plants around them if you harvest them. Garden weeds like lambs quarters are also tasty and nutritious but most gardeners would be thrilled for you to pull as much as you want!

Eat just a little bit the first time. People can be allergic to any food, including wild foods. As with any food, eat just a small amount the first time to see if you react (especially if you have other food allergies).

Read books and join groups to learn more. The foraging community is full of knowledgeable, friendly people who are happy to help you learn.

Why do you like foraging?

I like foraging because it's such a cool feeling to know exactly where every ingredient in a meal is from, and it's a great excuse to spend time in nature.

Toria, 20

Foraging is a cool activity because you can provide for yourself and stay healthy in an affordable way.

Jack, 15

I like foraging because you can make tasty food with it and it's healthy at the same time.

Alex, 11

I love feeling less dependent on commercialized farming.

Rhia, 18



I like foraging because it's a great way to connect with nature and understand what's around you, and can provide good survival skills

Abby, 22

It's educational and it gives you food.

Fiona, 7

Next month's question:

What do you like to do outside in February?

Email your answers to aliciabayer@gmail.com

Foraging for

PINE NEEDLES

If you've ever eaten pesto, you've probably eaten part of a pine tree. Pesto is a traditional Italian pasta dish with a sauce usually made of pine nuts, basil, olive oil and Parmesan cheese.

Pine nuts are contained in pine cones. It's a lot of work to harvest them, but there are web pages and books that can teach you how if you want to try.

An easier way to enjoy pine trees is to make a tea, vinegar, sugar or syrup from pine needles.

Pine needles are very high in vitamin C. In the old days, many people drank pine needle tea in the winter time to get enough vitamin C when fruits and vegetables were rare. Vitamin C helps us fight infections and also protects us from getting a disease called scurvy. Some sailors used to bring pine needles on long voyages to prevent scurvy.

All pine trees are safe to eat, as are all spruce and fir trees. They all have slightly different flavors and scents. Famous herbalist Susun Weed says, "Don't worry if you don't know a soft pine from a hard pine, or even what kind of pines grow around you. Pines are safe to experiment with." The flavors can vary a lot, so if you don't like the taste of one variety, try another.



An easy way to positively ID pine needles is to look at how they attach to the branch. Pine needles grow in clusters of 2, 3 or 5 needles while other evergreens are attached as single needles.

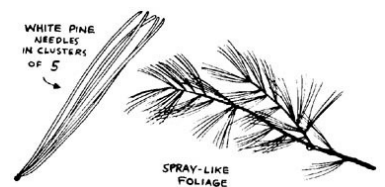
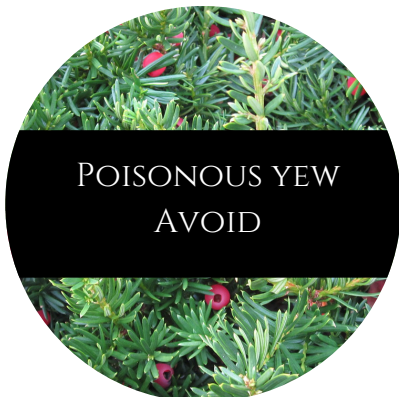


Image courtesy of Michigan Department of Natural Resources



The only kind of evergreen that is not safe is the yew, which usually grows as a shrub (often planted in front of people's houses and trimmed into shapes). Yews don't look anything like pine trees once you know how to properly identify them. Learn how to identify yews so you can avoid them.

We have information on how to ID pines, spruces, firs and edible evergreens of all kinds at our website (www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids), along with links for you to learn how to recognize and avoid yews.

Pine Recipes

(Find links to these fantastic foragers' websites and more pine recipes at the Wild Kids website)

Pine Needle Tea by Forager "Green Deane":

"You can make pine needle tea two ways. One is to pull three or four needles off a tree and stick them in a cup of hot water. Wait a few minutes then enjoy with or without sweetener.

Or collect a handful of pine needles. Needles nearest the trunk are higher in Vitamin C. Chop the needles and put them into a tea ball. Bring water to a boil. Take off the boil. Steep the pine needles for 3-5 minutes. The tea is delicate."

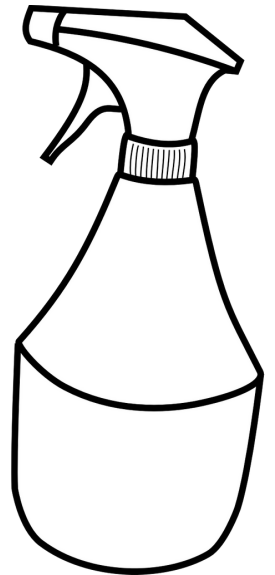
Pine Needle Vinegar by Herbalist Susun Weed:

"I preserve all the vitamins found in fresh pine needles by soaking them in apple cider vinegar for six weeks. I fill a wide-mouthed jar with pine needles and pour room-temperature, pasteurized apple cider vinegar over them until they are completely covered. A plastic (or non-metal) lid and a label with the name of the plant and the date completes the preparation. I call this tasty vinegar 'home-made balsamic vinegar' and you will be surprised at how much it tastes like the store bought stuff -- 'Only better,' say many, with a smile."

Don't toss your Christmas tree or holiday wreath yet!

EVERGREEN VINEGAR CLEANER

Here's a fun and easy way to make your own homemade cleaner and get some more use out of your Christmas tree or evergreen wreath. Fill a glass jar with small branches and pine needles, packed tightly. Cover the pine needles with white vinegar (heated for best results) and cap it with a non-metal cap. Place it in a dark place for 6-8 weeks and then strain. Transfer the liquid to a spray bottle and use it for general cleaning like counters, floors and mirrors.



Pine Sugar from Chef Jeremy Charles on Australia's Foodie Tuesday:

50g fresh pine needles
75g sugar

Blend pine needles and sugar in a high speed blender or food processor on full speed for 20 seconds. Pass through a fine sieve and discard the leftover pine fibers.

Snowy Poems for January



Winter

By Walter de la Mare

And the robin flew
Into the air, the air,
The white mist through;
And small and rare
The night-frost fell
Into the calm and misty dell.

And the dusk gathered low,
And the silver moon and stars
On the frozen snow
Drew taper bars,
Kindled winking fires
In the hooded briers.

And the sprawling Bear
Growled deep in the sky;
And Orion's hair
Streamed sparkling by:
But the North sighed low,
"Snow, snow, more snow!"

Some places are very cold in January & in some places it's warm.

It's winter in the Northern hemisphere, but summer time in the Southern hemisphere.

What is the weather like right now where you live?

Winter-Time

By Robert Louis Stevenson

Late lies the wintry sun a-bed,
A frosty, fiery sleepy-head;
Blinks but an hour or two; and then,
A blood-red orange, sets again.

Before the stars have left the skies,
At morning in the dark I rise;
And shivering in my nakedness,
By the cold candle, bathe and dress.

Close by the jolly fire I sit
To warm my frozen bones a bit;
Or with a reindeer-sled, explore
The colder countries round the door.

When to go out, my nurse doth wrap
Me in my comforter and cap;
The cold wind burns my face, and blows
Its frosty pepper up my nose.

Black are my steps on silver sod;
Thick blows my frosty breath abroad;
And tree and house, and hill and lake,
Are frosted like a wedding cake.

Dust of Snow By Robert Frost

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.



Who was Elizabeth Blackwell?

There were two famous women named Elizabeth Blackwell who were both really amazing women! One of them was a British doctor who was the first woman to be awarded a medical degree in the United States. The other Elizabeth Blackwell is the one we'll focus on in Wild Kids.

That Elizabeth Blackwell was a Scottish woman who lived in London in the 1700's. Her husband was a doctor & printer who got into some trouble for not having the training he needed to legally practice his jobs and he was imprisoned for not paying his debts. She was determined to raise enough money to support their young child and free him.

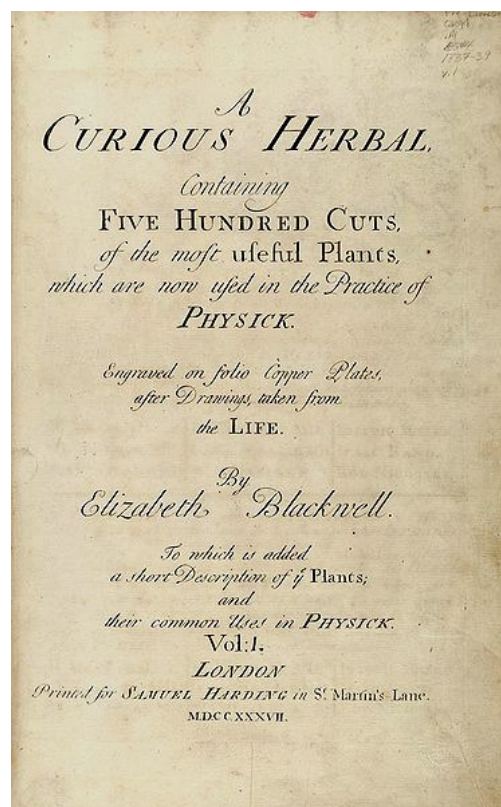
Elizabeth had been trained as an artist and she began drawing and engraving botanical illustrations of newly discovered plants. She didn't have any training as a botanist (an expert in plants) but she learned everything she needed to and found people to help her. Her husband wrote the descriptions of each plant in several languages and her illustrations were published in a large book. Doctors and herbalists loved it and it made enough money to free her husband.

Elizabeth published over 500 engraved plates of plants. They are still some of the best botanical drawings in the world and we still use them today.

Every month in Wild Kids, we'll publish two of Ms. Blackwell's illustrations. You can color them if you like, or just collect them to help identify them. If you look closely, you'll see how much detail Elizabeth provided so we can know these plants.

Elizabeth Blackwell's story is really interesting. If you want to learn more about her and what happened to her and her husband, visit our web site for some good links. She was a very strong, talented woman!

Thank you, Elizabeth Blackwell!



"THE PINE TREE, OR MANUR'D PINE"



From: *A Curious Herbal: Containing Five Hundred Cuts Of The Most Useful Plants Which Are Now Used In The Practice Of Physick,*
 Written, illustrated and engraved by Elizabeth Blackwell, 1737

"WILD ROSE"



From: *A Curious Herbal: Containing Five Hundred Cuts Of The Most Useful Plants Which Are Now Used In The Practice Of Physick,*
 Written, illustrated and engraved by Elizabeth Blackwell, 1737

My January Nature Journal



January Weather

Directions: Designate one color for each type of weather.
Color a leaf with one or two colors each day to show that day's weather.



Key



sunny



cloudy



rainy



snowy



windy/
stormy

January Bird List

Birds spotted this month

January Animal List

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month

January Nature Notes

Record any interesting discoveries here -- plants you identify, foods you forage, outdoor activities, cool nature projects, nature books read, or just notes about what it's like outside this week!

Week 1 Sketches & Observations

Week 2 Sketches & Observations

Week 3 Sketches & Observations

Week 4 Sketches & Observations



Next month in Wild Kids...

Foraging cattails all year long
Making play dough with natural dyes
Who's tracks are these?
Free printable ID guides
and lots more!

Want to see your stuff in Wild Kids?

We welcome articles, photos, artwork and other submissions from kids and their grown ups.
Visit magicalchildhood.com/wildkids to learn more.