

*May 2019*

# WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS



**Foraging Wild  
Asparagus**

**Making  
Flower Crowns**

**A Nature Hunt  
for May**

**Seasonal poems,  
activities, nature  
journal pages & more**



# From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

## Welcome May!

May is always a busy month for our family. Here in Minnesota, it's the start of prime foraging season. We gather lots of wild edible plants like ramps, nettles, garlic mustard and wild asparagus. We are careful not to over-harvest some wild plants like ramps and we try to take all we can of invasive plants like garlic mustard that threaten our local parks. Our kids like to gather dandelion flowers to make dandelion fritters by dipping them in batter and frying them. We also love to make violet syrup this time of year, which is especially fun because violets are pH indicators, meaning if you make a liquid by simmering their flowers then it will turn colors depending on how acidic or alkaline the liquid is. Violet syrup starts out as a lovely purple color until you add lemon juice (an acid) and it turns bright pink!

We also do lots of hiking in the woods and playing at the lake this time of year. Sometimes it's too cold for swimming yet here in Minnesota but we like to look for rocks, shells, driftwood and artifacts on the beach.

This time of year we're also busy planting gardens. We grow lots of food that we eat all year and we also love to grow flowers. Then there's tree climbing, bike riding, long boarding, barbecuing and other ways that we just have fun being outside.

What are you hoping to do outdoors this month? Are you looking forward to doing anything out in nature now that May is here? No matter where you live, I'll bet there are some really fun ways to play in nature this month. If you like, write in and tell us about them.

Have a wild month!

*Alicia*

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Cover photo and vinca flower crown photos by Lydia Koltai.

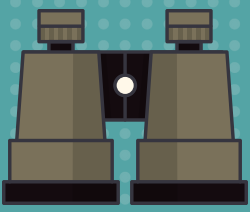
Lydia Koltai is an unschooling mama to four incredible kids. She is the owner of Elder Moon Apothecary, providing herbal medicines and medicinal plant starts to her community in Oxford, MS. Find her at Elder Moon Apothecary on Instagram and Facebook. Lydia's daughter Violet says she loves nature because "it's cool and it's beautiful."

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.

Find lots more links, information and fun to accompany this month's themes at  
[www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids](http://www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids).





# Go Wild in May



## 10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

*Color in the circles of the ones you do!*

Start a nature table or other display of neat natural items you find

Make May Day baskets and leave them on neighbors' doors

Make a flower crown! We show you how in this issue

Roast dinner (or a snack) over a campfire

Go hiking

Draw 3 bugs or flowers you find outside

Learn about a new wild plant to forage

Have a picnic outside for breakfast

Write a nature poem and send it to Wild Kids!

Head on a walk with gloves and a garbage bag and fill it with litter you find



# Foraging Wild Asparagus

Foraging asparagus is kind of like a treasure hunt.

Asparagus grows on stalks. You'll see these little pegs growing out of the ground but they're really hard to see. It's easier to look for the old dead stalks from last year. The new spears will grow around them

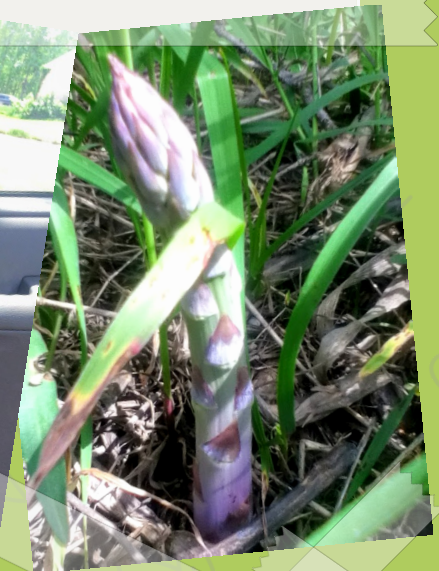
The spears should be at least 4 inches before you cut them. They grow so fast that you can come back the next day and the little ones will be long enough, especially on hot days.

Sometimes they grow in easy to see places but sometimes they grow under bushes. They usually grow in ditches and along fence lines by farms around here.

You take a small knife and cut the stem. Try to cut as low as you can so you get a lot. If they're too tall and they have branches going off of them, they're too old and you need to leave them. They won't taste good and if you wait until next year you'll have more.

Later in the summer, asparagus gets big with little berries. My dad calls it asparagus Christmas trees then. If you see an asparagus Christmas tree, mark down that spot for next year and you'll know where to look for new asparagus in the spring.

By Alex Hrdlicka, age 11





Don't eat the berries! They're mildly poisonous

Asparagus season here in Minnesota is in May around the same time morel mushrooms are out. They taste really good together and when we find morels my mom always cooks them up in butter with asparagus and serves them over rice.

We freeze our extra asparagus to eat later in the year.

We usually forage between 50 and 60 pounds of asparagus during asparagus season!



**LATIN NAME:** *Asparagus officinalis*

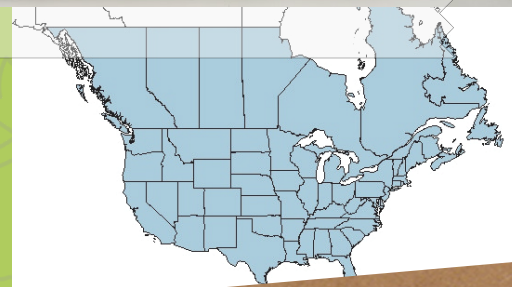
**OTHER NAMES:** None

**SEASON:** Spring

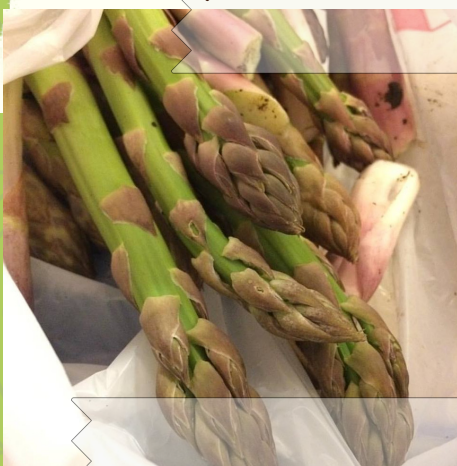
**WHERE FOUND:** Hedgerows, fence lines, fields, grassy areas

**PARTS USED:** Young spears (stem tips)

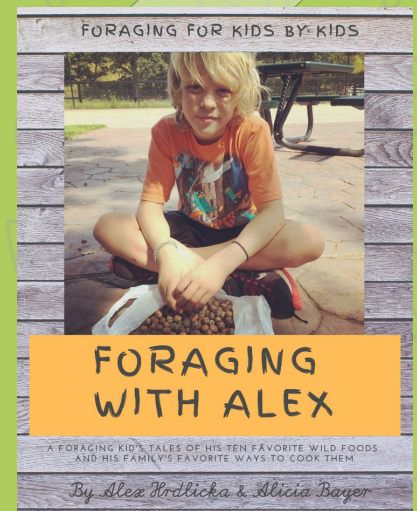
**TIPS:** Look for last year's ferny dead spears. Leave some stalks to keep the plant healthy for next year.



Wild asparagus is found in all U.S. states and Canadian provinces & in Mexico, Europe & more



Excerpted from *Foraging With Alex*, by Alex Hrdlicka & Alicia Bayer, due to be released summer 2019





# Flower Crowns

Have you made flower crowns? They're so fun and easy!  
Here are three simple ways to make them.  
We have videos and more on the Wild Kids Website, too.

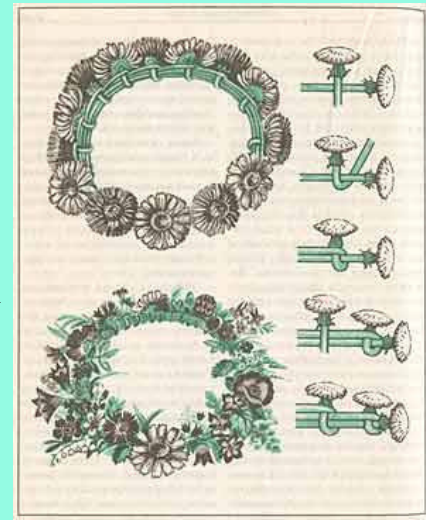


Mama Lydia used invasive wildflowers to make these lovely flower crowns with her forest fairies. She says:

*These are periwinkles (Vinca spp.), I just pull a section of vine and strip off the leaves and string the flowers on it.*

This is another easy way to make a flower crown.

Simply wrap one stem around the flower of the next, pull both stems to the side, and add another. Wrap that stem around the first two, pull all three stems to the side, and continue. As stems end, they will be woven into the line well enough to stay put. To finish, wrap the last flower around the first flower and the end of the chain, forming a circle.



To make split stem flower chains:

Trim flower stems to about 4 inches. Use a fingernail to make a small slit in the bottom half of each stem. Thread one stem through the slit in the next, creating a chain. Continue, adding flowers to reach desired length. To form the crown, make a second slit in the stem of the first flower, and slip the last flower through it.





# Poems for May

*"The world's favorite season is the spring. All things seem possible in May."*

-- Edwin Way Teale

May

The wind is tossing the lilacs,  
The new leaves laugh in the sun,  
And the petals fall on the orchard wall,  
But for me the spring is done.

Beneath the apple blossoms  
I go a wintry way,  
For love that smiled in April  
Is false to me in May.

- Sara Teasdale

*When April steps aside for May,  
Like diamonds all the rain-drops glisten;  
Fresh violets open every day:  
To some new bird each hour we listen.*

- Lucy Larcom

Ode in May

What is so sweet and dear  
As a prosperous morn in May,  
The confident prime of the day,  
And the dauntless youth of the year,  
When nothing that asks for bliss,  
Asking aright, is denied,  
And half of the world a bridegroom is,  
And half of the world a bride?

- William Watson, 1880

I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds, and bowers:  
Of April, May, or June, and July flowers.

I sing of Maypoles, Hock-carts, wassails, wakes,  
Of bridegrooms, brides, and of the bridal cakes.

- Robert Herrick, Hesperides, 1648

In Early May

O MY dear, the world to-day  
Is more lovely than a dream!  
Magic hints from far away  
Haunt the woodland, and the stream  
Murmurs in his rocky bed  
Things that never can be said.  
Starry dogwood is in flower,  
Gleaming through the mystic woods.  
It is beauty's perfect hour  
In the wild spring solitudes.  
Now the orchards in full blow  
Shed their petals white as snow.  
All the air is honey-sweet  
With the lilacs white and red,  
Where the blossoming branches meet  
In an arbor overhead.  
And the laden cherry trees  
Murmur with the hum of bees.  
All the earth is fairy green,  
And the sunlight filmy gold,  
Full of ecstasies unseen,  
Full of mysteries untold.  
Who would not be out-of-door,  
Now the spring is here once more!

Bliss William Carman



# CHICKWEED

Plate 164.



*Chickweed.*

*Eliz. Blackwell delin. sculp. et Pinx.*

1. Flower.  
2. Calix.  
3. Seed Vessel.  
4. Seed.

*Alsiene.*

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



# "SPARAGUS" (ASPARAGUS)



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



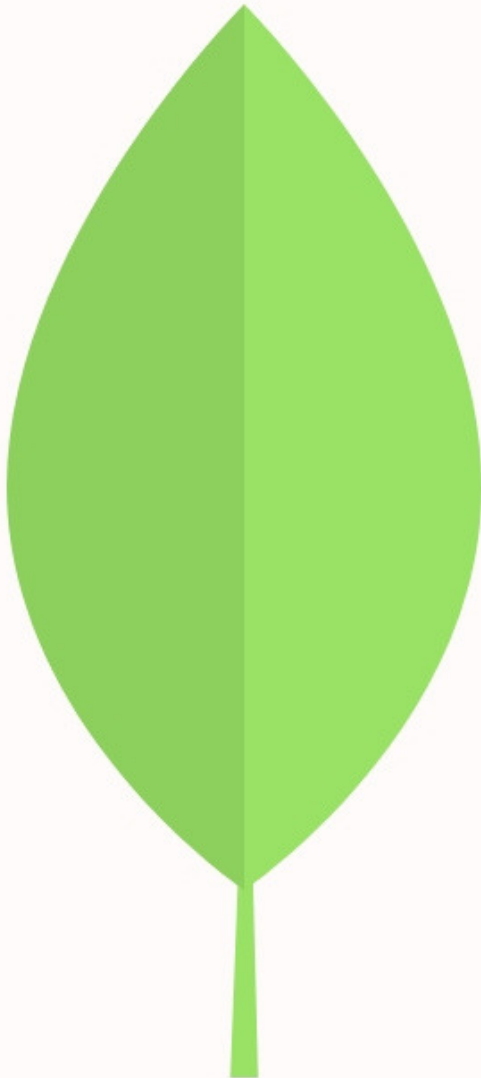
*My Nature Journal*

*May*



# MAY NATURE HUNT

HOW MANY  
CAN YOU  
FIND?

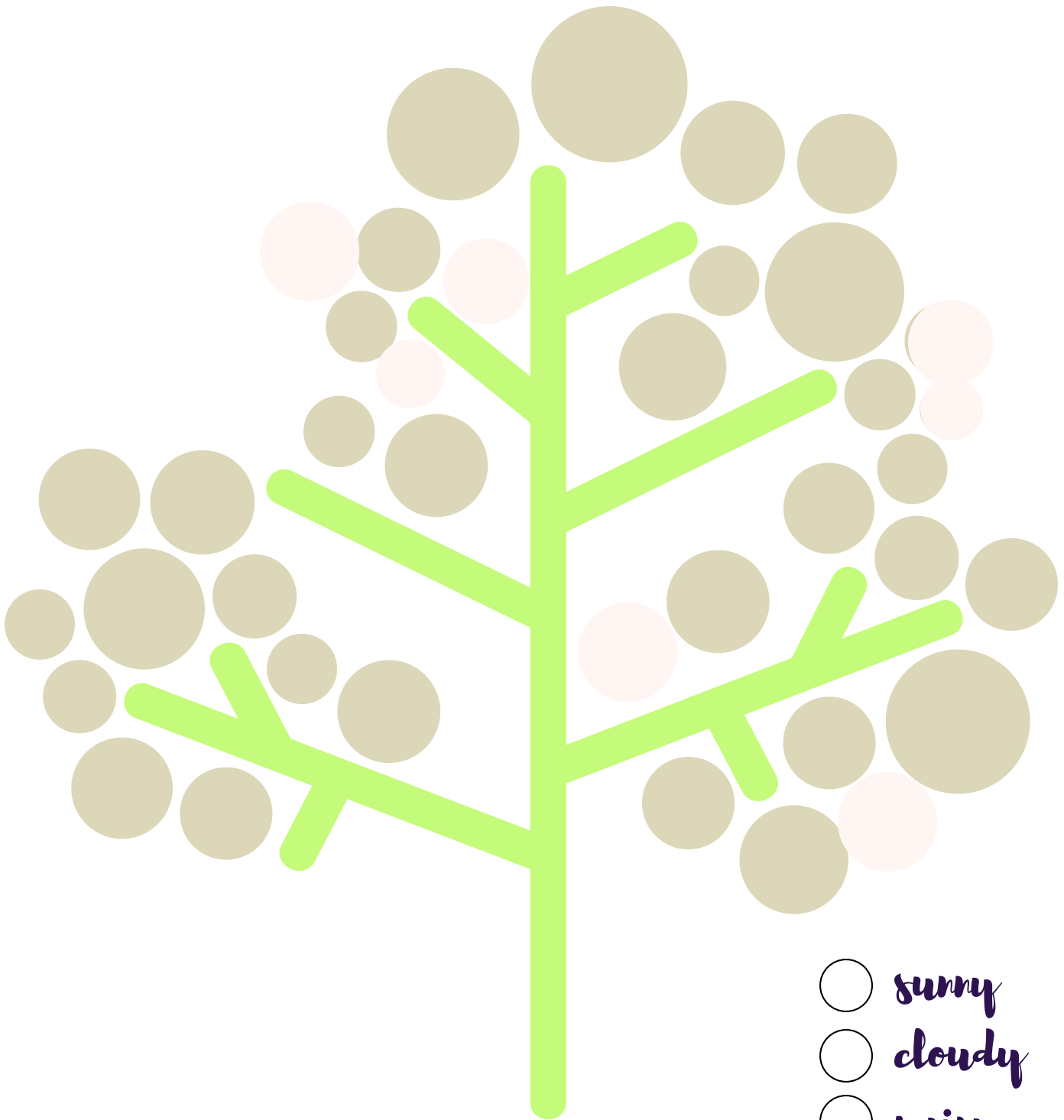


- ☐ An edible flower
- ☐ A pollinator
- ☐ An edible green
- ☐ A fossil
- ☐ An invasive plant
- ☐ A threatened plant
- ☐ A poisonous plant
- ☐ Animal scat
- ☐ Tracks or footprints
- ☐ A mushroom
- ☐ Seeds
- ☐ A nest
- ☐ Something shaped like a letter
- ☐ Something man-made
- ☐ Something animals could eat
- ☐ A spiderweb
- ☐ A plant with thorns
- ☐ Signs of erosion
- ☐ An animal den
- ☐ Something birds could eat
- ☐ A nut
- ☐ A feather
- ☐ Signs of pollution
- ☐ Something you think is pretty

*Take pictures or write down the items you find. We have hints and tips on the Wild Kids website.*



# May Weather Tree



- ☐ sunny
- ☐ cloudy
- ☐ rainy
- ☐ snowy
- ☐ stormy



# May Bird List

Birds spotted this month

# May Animal List

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month



# MAY 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 Observations

Week 2 Observations

Week 3 Observations

Week 4 Observations

## MY FORAGING GUIDE FOR:

GENERAL SKETCH OF THE PLANT

CLOSE-UP SKETCHES OF PLANT PARTS

LATIN NAME \_\_\_\_\_

WHERE FOUND \_\_\_\_\_

PARTS USED \_\_\_\_\_

## LOOKALIKES & HOW TO POSITIVELY ID:

WARNINGS: \_\_\_\_\_

FORAGING RECORD (DATES, WHERE FOUND, HOW IT WAS USED)

MY RATING FOR THIS PLANT







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](https://magicalchildhood.com/wildkids) to learn more.