

August 2019

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

Make a Terrarium

**It's Elderberry
Season!**

**Raising
Monarch
Butterflies**

**Seasonal poems,
activities, nature journal
pages and more!**



From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Hello August!

What are you hoping to do outdoors this month?

Here in Minnesota, August is the last of the summer months even though fall doesn't really start until September. It is often already getting cool by mid-August. We like to do lots of camping, swimming, hiking and boating this time of year. Our state parks rent kayaks and canoes very inexpensively, which makes for a fun afternoon!

We are busy harvesting garden goodies like tomatoes and we pick buckets of bush cherries from our back yard. We preserve some of our fresh produce by canning, freezing and drying so we can enjoy it all year.

This time of year we are foraging wild grapes, elderberries, wild plums, mint, choke cherries, raspberries, dock seed, lambs quarters, chicken of the woods mushrooms, apples, pears, purslane and acorns -- just to name a tiny bit of what's out there right now!

We homeschool but we have lots of friends who are headed back to school in August. We try to make good use of the last of the lazy days of summer with friends.

In the Southern Hemisphere, kids are getting ready to welcome spring and then summer. Our friends in South Africa and Australia are saying goodbye to winter while we're getting ready for it.

Wherever you are in the world, I hope you have a fantastic August, with lots of wild adventures!

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.

Go Wild in August!

10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

See how many different kinds of butterflies you can spot. Draw them and write down when and where you saw them

Lie on a blanket after dark and watch for shooting stars (meteors)

Gather some sand from different places (the beach, a sandbox, a parking lot...) and compare it under a pocket scope or magnifying app

Have lunch in a tree

Go camping (even in your own back yard)

Make a simple terrarium (we tell you how in this issue)

Write a poem or draw a picture of why you love nature and send it to Wild Kids Magazine!

Look for elderberries and dry them or make elderberry lemonade with them (we have lots of links on the website)

Go boating or make homemade boats to sail from natural materials

Have a weed contest. Dig up weeds and pot them up, then see who can grow the biggest, healthiest weed

Raising Monarch Butterflies

Raising monarch butterflies from caterpillar eggs has been one of the most magical ways that we've done nature studies in our home for many summers.

Some families order butterfly kits through the mail, but we've filled our yard with lots of plants that butterflies need at various parts of their life cycles so that they'll come to us and we'll have everything they need to naturally grow as our temporary house guests.

The most important plant for this is milkweed. We scattered the fluffy seed pods a few times and that was all it took for plants to spring up in various parts of our yard. After that, the monarchs came to us every summer and the rest was easy.

Sometimes we bring in a milkweed leaf that had a tiny monarch caterpillar egg on the underside. The egg is as small as the period at the end of this sentence.

We put the leaf in a glass mason jar with a cloth on top of it. The cloth allows lots of air into the jar but the tiny weave of the cloth prevents the new (very tiny) caterpillar from being able to wander out of the jar. Be sure to use fairly tight weaves or you may lose your caterpillar!

We wait several days for anything to happen.

When they hatch, they are such tiny caterpillars that we have trouble seeing them. We even thought we've lost them for a day or two. They can be very, very small when they first hatch!

But they grow...



... and grow



...and grow.



This process takes several weeks as the caterpillar completes this part of his life cycle. While he's growing, we make sure to provide a constant source of fresh milkweed leaves in the jar. They dry out after a few days so we'd rotate them as they seemed not as fresh. The milkweed provides everything they need to grow and be healthy.

We also clean the bottom of the habitat as needed. The old leaves and caterpillar waste can go right into the compost or garden to contribute back to nature.

Caterpillars will typically curl up like this when they feel threatened and think they may be eaten. If your caterpillar does this, remember to be very gentle and still with him so he'll feel comfortable and safe.



Even after curling up, this caterpillar quickly figured out that all was okay and set about exploring. This kind of up-close nature study can be great for kids, but be sure to gently put caterpillars back in their habitat so they don't get too stressed. That way they can busy themselves with the business of growing and preparing for their eventual transformation!

The caterpillars keep growing and getting bigger until they are so big and fat that we know they will "J" soon (hang like a J and get ready to make a chrysalis). They climb to the top of their habitat to scout out a good location.

Then it is time to make a butterfly house if you don't have a habitat.

We have used a shoe box on its side covered with plastic wrap with lots of air holes, a big iced tea jug with cheesecloth rubber banded around the top, and a mesh butterfly habitat that someone gave us. All of them work! We always put in a nice long stick to climb onto and dry on when they emerge from their chrysalis, since their wings will be wet and they will need to pump them and dry them for several hours before they can fly.



Having a tall stick and lots of room is important for butterflies. If they don't have room to spread their wings out, they will dry deformed and they'll never be able to fly. We are helicopter parents when our butterflies emerge for this reason.

Even when you think your caterpillar is as big as he's going to get and so close to forming a chrysalis, you typically still need to wait longer before it finally happens.

Then one day you will find that the chrysalis was formed.

We have tried to catch our caterpillars in action as they hung and formed their chrysalids over the years, but we have almost never caught the process. They do it remarkably fast once they are ready, and always seem to pick the perfect private moment.



First they will go to the top of the box and hang like a J, and stay that way for quite some time. Then they will rather quickly form the chrysalis. You have to be very patient and observant to catch that part! Some of our kids have been lucky enough to watch it happen.

Notice the color of the chrysalis at this point. It will start out a light green. Over the next couple of weeks, it will darken and change colors. You will be able to barely see the developing butterfly inside, right down to the pattern on the wings as they form. You'll also notice the beautiful gold dots along the top of the chrysalis.

Then one day, you'll discover that your butterfly has emerged.

He will have to hang and dry his new wings over the next few hours. At this point, the butterfly pumps the wings to fully extend them and help them dry straight. Don't rush this time to release your butterfly outside and do not touch or bother your butterfly during this time period at all. You'll observe how the butterfly will expand, pump and gently flutter his wings over the next couple of hours (typically in the morning).



Once your butterfly seems fully dried and is starting to flutter in the habitat and show signs of looking for an exit, take him to the backyard (still in the habitat). You can then open the habitat and gently offer your finger next to his feet for him to climb onto.

DO NOT TOUCH THE BUTTERFLY'S WINGS.

They are very fragile. Remember to be extremely careful with the butterfly.

The butterfly will climb onto your finger just as it would a branch, and will probably hang out there for a few minutes. Ours do not typically fly off right away. They have never flown before and their wings may not be fully ready. We have had a few take off right away, but most do not.



If your butterfly does not fly off right away, find a good spot to put him where he can finish drying his wings and readying for flight. He will probably stay there for a few more minutes and then may fly just a short distance to another perch. Then, before you know it, he'll fly way up into the sky and flutter away.

With the milkweed leaves in your yard, it's likely that you'll keep seeing butterflies every year. Our kids like to wonder if any of "their" butterflies are returning and laying any of the new eggs that we raise the next year.

Enjoy the adventure!



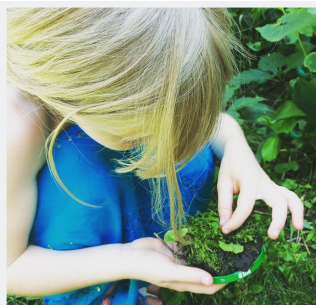
Make a Terrarium



You can make a whole little ecosystem that will take care of itself with just a glass jar and a bit of moss and dirt.

Simply dig up small clump of moss from a shady spot and put it on the lid of your jar. Screw the jar over the top of it and keep it in indirect light in your house.

The glass will hold moisture and your plants should keep growing. Watch and see what happens in your little ecosystem!



It's Elderberry Season!

This time of year is a favorite of our family because the elderberries are ripe. We find elderberries all over. They grow wild in every state in the United States and throughout Canada, Europe, Mexico, Australia and beyond.

Most people don't ever notice elder shrubs because they just look like small trees or bushes most of the year. In early summer you'll see their big umbels (umbrella shaped flower clusters) of very light beige flowers. These are elder flowers, and they're tasty and helpful on their own. Some people use them in tea if they have seasonal allergies or if they get a cold, and lots of people in Europe like to dip them in batter and make elderflower fritters (which are kind of like flower pancakes). Other people like to make elderflower cordial or syrup, which was used to make an elderflower cake for the last royal wedding. If you let them ripen, elderflowers turn into elderberries, which have been used by people around the world for everything from pies to wine to flu remedies for thousands of years. People also used to think they were magical and they used them for things like flutes and wands.



We pick loads of elderberries every August and September. We dry some for health remedies. We freeze others for desserts and muffins. We can some as jam, jelly and elderberry pie filling. We juice some and can elderberry juice and elderberry lemonade concentrate. And some we bake in desserts like elderberry meringue pie.

All of the kids help rake the berries off their stems with forks into a big bowl, and then we juice, freeze or dry them. All year long, we use our elderberries for baking, health remedies and more. It feels really good to reach for jars of elderberries we remember gathering ourselves when it's cold and snowy outside!

We have links on the web site to help you find elderberries of your own and to find fun ways to use them.

I hope you find lots of elderberries this year and lots of great ways to put them to use!

August Poetry

*"August was nearly over - the month of apples and falling stars, the last care-free month for the school children.
The days were not hot, but sunny and limpidly clear - the first sign of advancing autumn."
— Victor Nekrasov, In the Trenches of Stalingrad*

If Still Your Orchards Bear
by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Brother, that breathe the August air
Ten thousand years from now,
And smell—if still your orchards bear
Tart apples on the bough—

The early windfall under the tree,
And see the red fruit shine,
I cannot think your thoughts will be
Much different from mine.

Should at that moment the full moon
Step forth upon the hill,
And memories hard to bear at noon,
By moonlight harder still,
Form in the shadow of the trees, —
Things that you could not spare
And live, or so you thought, yet these
All gone, and you still there,

A man no longer what he was,
Nor yet the thing he'd planned,
The chilly apple from the grass
Warmed by your living hand—

I think you will have need of tears;
I think they will not flow;
Supposing in ten thousand years
Men ache, as they do now.

August
by Dorothy Parker

When my eyes are weeds,
And my lips are petals, spinning
Down the wind that has beginning
Where the crumpled beeches start
In a fringe of salty reeds;
When my arms are elder-bushes,
And the rangy lilac pushes
Upward, upward through my heart;

Summer, do your worst!
Light your tinsel moon, and call on
Your performing stars to fall on
Headlong through your paper sky;
Nevermore shall I be cursed
By a flushed and amorous slattern,
With her dusty laces' pattern
Trailing, as she straggles by.

Moonlight, Summer Moonlight
by Emily Bronte

'Tis moonlight, summer moonlight,
All soft and still and fair;
The solemn hour of midnight
Breathes sweet thoughts everywhere,

But most where trees are sending
Their breezy boughs on high,
Or stooping low are lending
A shelter from the sky.

And there in those wild bowers
A lovely form is laid;
Green grass and dew-steeped flowers
Wave gently round her head.

ELDER

Plate 151.



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

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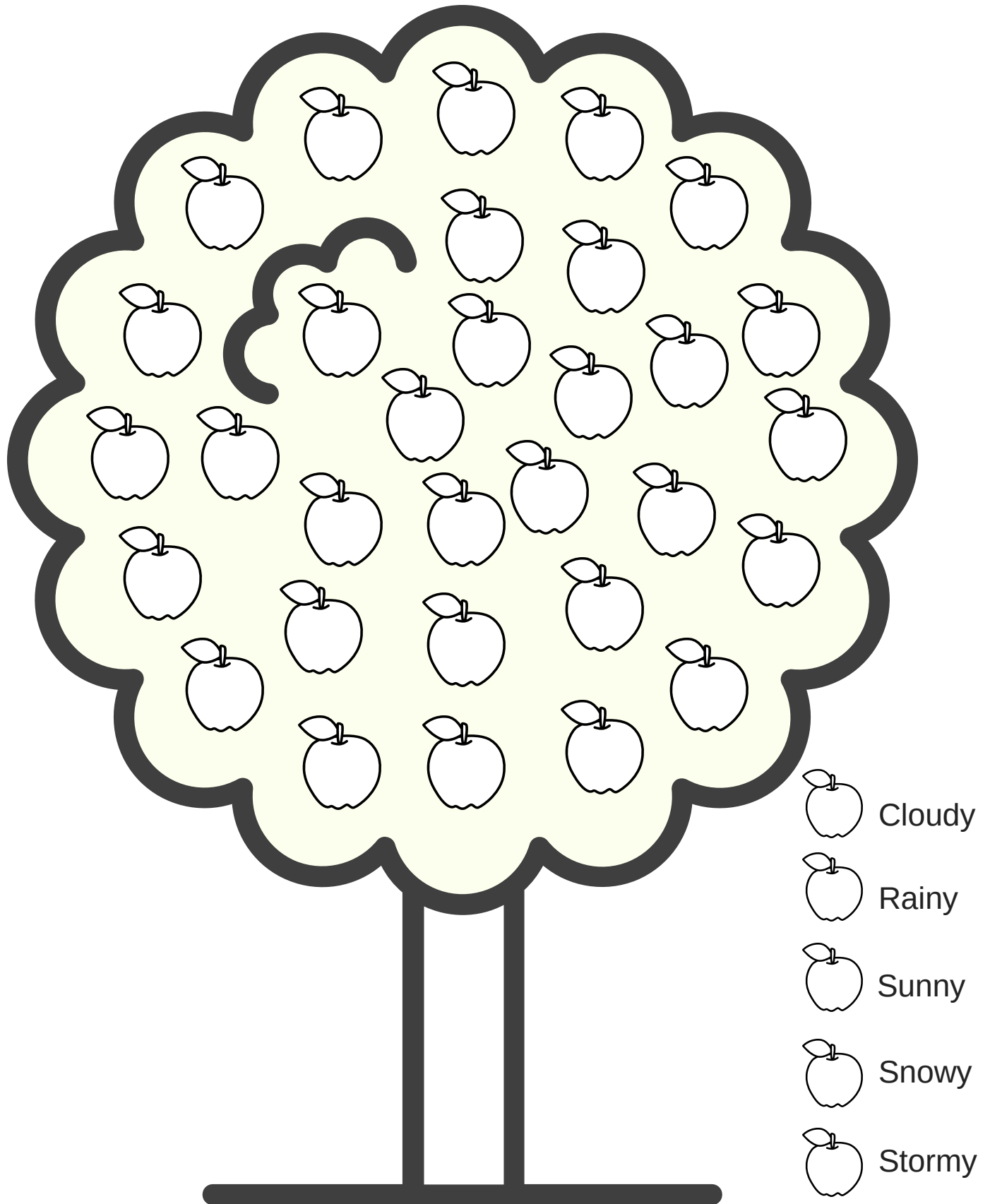


From: *A Curious Herbal: Containing Five Hundred Cuts Of The Most Useful Plants Which Are Now Used In The Practice Of Physick,*
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My Nature Journal

August

August Weather Tree



August Bird List

Birds spotted this month

August Animal List

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month

AUGUST 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!

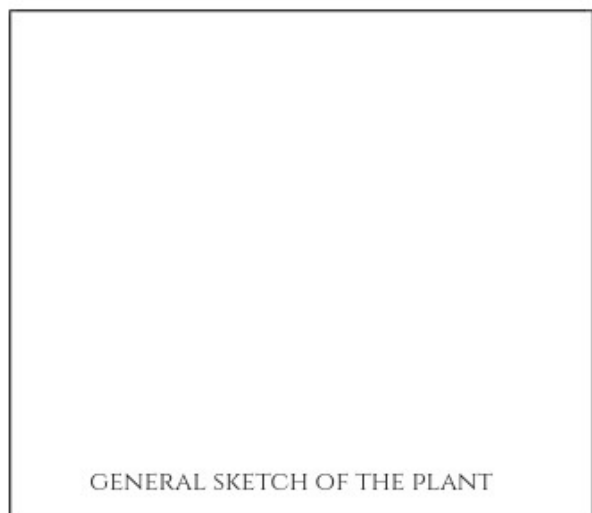
Week 1 Observations

Week 2 Observations

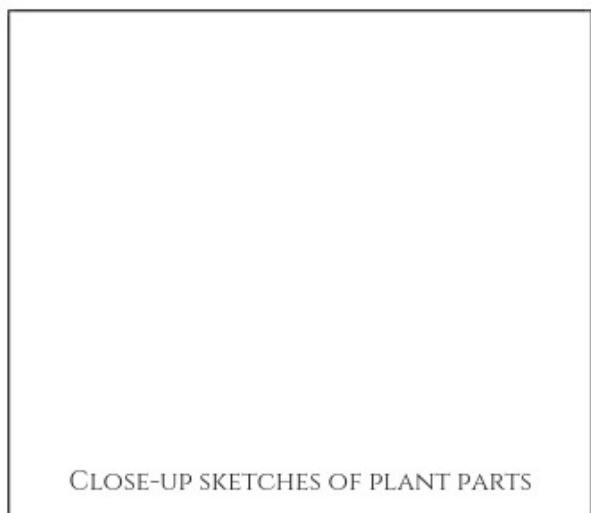
Week 3 Observations

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 to learn more.