

August 2020

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

Blow bubbles
with hibiscus
flowers!

Decoding
Butterfly
Wings

Design a
Butterfly

Seasonal poems, activities,
nature journal pages and more



From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Hello August!

I hope you and your family are happy and well.

We're nearing the end of summer here in the Northern hemisphere, while those in the Southern hemisphere are heading into it. Here in Minnesota, our gardens are filling with tomatoes, peppers, squash and beans for drying. Herbs are going strong and lots of flowers like echinacea and black eyed susans are blooming.

This month, we hope to be foraging wild grapes, elderberries, wild plums, mint, choke cherries, raspberries, hawthorn berries, walnuts, chicken of the woods mushrooms, apples, pears, purslane and acorns -- just to name some of our favorite wild foods in August.

We've compiled some fun things for you in this month's Wild Kids Magazine. There's info on how butterflies use their colors and designs to stay safe, find mates and more, and then a design-your-own page of butterflies you can make up with what you've learned. There's also information about how to make bubble blowing solution from hibiscus flowers, a fun traditional practice that kids in some regions have been doing for years, plus lots more.

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

Look for shells, rocks, driftwood and other natural materials with "fairy holes" to hang from a mobile.

Trace the shadows of plants on paper and then color them in with paint, crayons or markers.

Make hibiscus bubbles (we tell you how in this issue)

Make a nature bracelet with a loop of clear packing tape (sticky part facing out) and press flower petals, clover leaves, etc. onto it. Seal with another piece of tape.

Look for wild elderberries to forage (we have links to help at the August 2019 issue).

Gather old pie tins and utensils and make mud pies. Decorate them with flower petals and seeds.

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

Try to write a nature poem every day this month. Send your favorite to Wild Kids Magazine!

Conduct an ant experiment. Find a space where you find them outside and put out an assortment of foods (sugar, bread crumbs, flour...). Guess which ones they'll prefer and see if you're right.

Go for a sprinkler walk (aim for all the sprinklers in the neighborhood that hit sidewalks).

Decoding Butterfly Wings



Did you know that the markings on butterflies all help them in one way or another?



Eyespots scare away predators who think there's an animal there



Butterflies in cooler climates sometimes have dark colors to absorb more sun to stay warm



Many patterns and wing shapes are camouflage, like those of a dead leaf butterfly



Some butterflies have beautiful colors and patterns to attract a mate



The zebra swallowtail has markings that make it look like bird droppings



Some butterflies are red, orange or yellow because this usually means poison to predators



Some butterflies have shades of brown that help them blend in to tree bark and dusty roads



Some butterflies mimic other butterflies that are poisonous like this non-poisonous viceroy that looks like a monarch



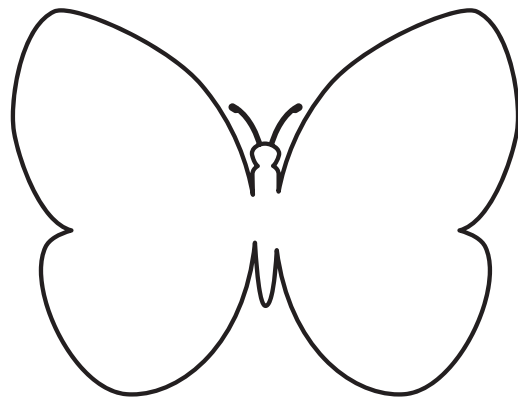
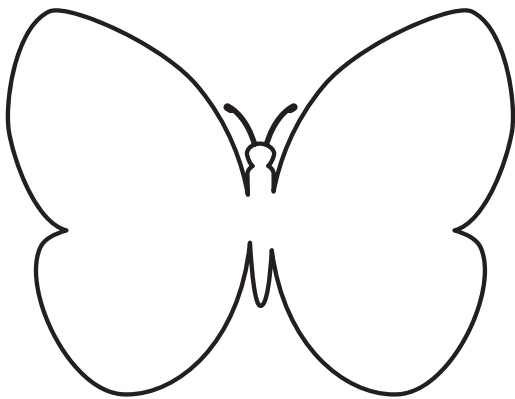
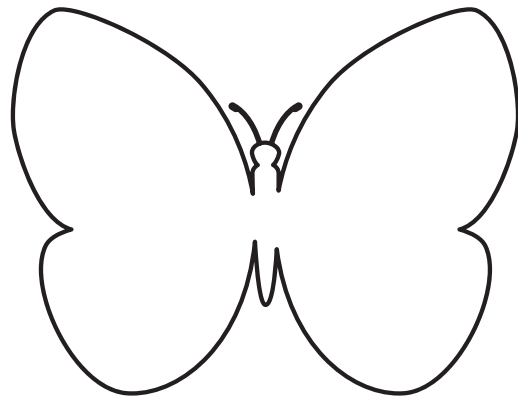
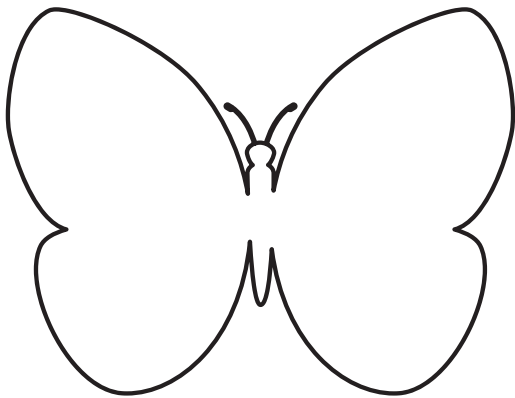
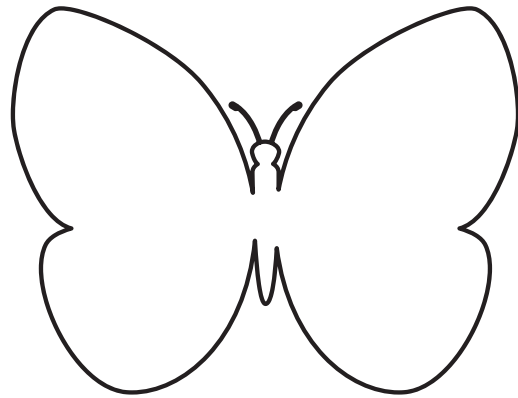
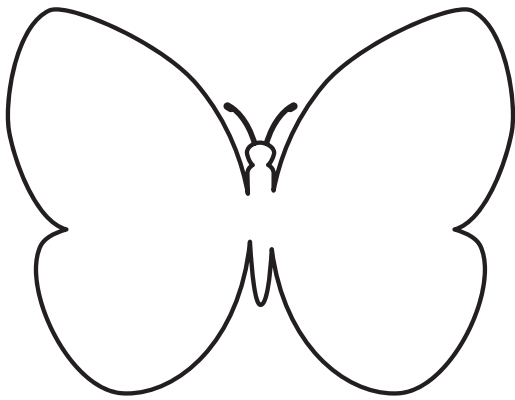
Some butterflies' wings shimmer, possibly to attract males or otherwise communicate



Butterflies use distinct bands and markings to easily find others in their species

Design a Butterfly!

Now that you know how colors and markings can help butterflies, you can design a few of your own. How do their colors and marks help them? You can name your new species if you like!



Making Gumamela (Hibiscus) Bubbles



Did you know that you can make bubble blowing solution using hibiscus flowers and leaves?

Gumamela (hibiscus) bubbles have been a popular pastime for children in the Philippines for many years. They crush the flowers and leaves until a sticky substance comes out and mix that with water and a little bit of soap (dish soap, shampoo or laundry detergent). Then they dip the hollow stalks of papaya in the solution to blow bubbles.

Lots of people have hibiscus trees or shrubs growing in their yards in the summer time for their beautiful flowers. We have some small potted hibiscus trees that we keep outside in the warm months and then bring inside for the cold winter. We gathered some of the flowers and leaves and made our own gumamela bubbles. Since we don't have access to papaya stalks, we just used bubble blowers. It worked great and was so fun. See if you can find some hibiscus plants to try it yourself!

Hibiscus is also known as Rose of Sharon and Rose Mallow. Some varieties of hibiscus are also used for tea and ecologically friendly newspaper.



Recipe:

1/4 cup dish soap
3/4 cup water
several hibiscus flowers and leaves
1 tsp sugar or corn syrup (optional)

Mash the hibiscus flowers and leaves with a mortar and pestle or between two rocks. Mix the other ingredients and add the mashed hibiscus. Swirl it with your fingers and squeeze the gel from the mashed hibiscus. You'll feel that it's very goopy! Strain it if you like and you're ready to use it for bubbles.

Note: We tried blowing bubbles with the mixture before we added the hibiscus to see if it really made better bubbles. We found that it did, but you might want to try it both ways too, for a fun science experiment.

Foraging Catmint & Sumac

Catmint and sumac are both popular plants for our family to forage in August. They are very different, but both are lots of fun.

Catmint is also known as catnip, and most people know it because of the funny effect it has on some cats. You might not know that some people also use it in tea, especially to soothe stomach aches or help relax. It doesn't have the best taste (it's not bad, just not as good as some others), so it's usually mixed with tastier teas like lemon balm. Our kids like to pick some of the fuzzy leaves and bring them in for our cats, who act very silly over it, rolling in it and giving us lots of attention whenever we track some of the scent in from our garden (it constantly pops up as a weed in our gardens).

Catmint also repels mosquitoes, which is another reason we love having it sprout up in our yard!

Catmint can be found in gardens, forests and fields throughout North America, Europe and beyond, and it is very common. You can tell it's in the mint family by its square stem. It has soft, fuzzy leaves and gets fairly tall and scraggly by late summer. You can buy catmint for your garden and the flowers tend to be pretty purple, but in the wild they're usually white. See if you can spot some on your next nature hike -- or even in your back yard!

Sumac is another very common plant you're likely to see a lot of this time of year in some regions. Some people mistakenly think all sumac is poisonous because a plant with a similar name -- poison sumac -- contains the same chemicals as poison ivy. They are very different in appearance and location though and are easy to tell apart. Poison sumac has white berries and grows in very wet areas. Stay away from it! Smooth sumac and staghorn sumac have bright red berries that have a wonderful tart taste when they ripen. We pick them right off the plant and suck the tartness off of them (they remind me of Sweet Tart candies) and then discard the centers. You have to pick sumac berries before it rains though, because rain washes all the wonderful flavor right off of them.

People use sumac in spice mixes in some countries. In other places, people love to make pink sumac-ade by soaking the berries in water and then straining and adding sugar. If you look by roadsides and at the edges of parks, you're likely to see sumac's bright red berries all over the place this time of year. Later in the year, you'll see its beautiful red foliage.



CATMINT (CATNIP)
(*Nepeta cataria*)



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

SUMAC
(*Rhus species*)

Plate 486.



Sumach.

Eliz. Blackwell delin. sculp. et Pinx.

- 1. Flower.
- 2. Calix.
- 3. Seed.
- 4. Seed (open).
- 5. Seed.

Rhus Obsoniorum.

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



August Poetry

"In August, the large masses of berries, which, when in flower, had attracted many wild bees, gradually assumed their bright velvety crimson hue, and by their weight again bent down and broke their tender limbs."

- Henry David Thoreau

The Soul of a Butterfly
by Thomas Wentworth Higginson

Over the field where the brown quails whistle,
Over the ferns where the rabbits lie,
Floats the tremulous down of a thistle.
Is it the soul of a butterfly?
See! how they scatter and then assemble;
Filling the air while the blossoms fade,—
Delicate atoms, that whirl and tremble
In the slanting sunlight that skirts the glade.
There goes the summer's inconstant lover,
Drifting and wandering, faint and far;
Only bewailed by the upland plover,
Watched by only the twilight star.
Come next August, when thistles blossom,
See how each is alive with wings!
Butterflies seek their souls in its bosom,
Changed thenceforth to immortal things.



Summer Evening, 1848
by John Clare

The frog half fearful jumps across the path,
And little mouse that leaves its hole at eve
Nimbles with timid dread beneath the swath;
My rustling steps awhile their joys deceive,
Till past,—and then the cricket sings more strong,
And grasshoppers in merry moods still wear
The short night weary with their fretting song.
Up from behind the molehill jumps the hare,
Cheat of his chosen bed, and from the bank
The yellowhammer flutters in short fears
From off its nest hid in the grasses rank,
And drops again when no more noise it hears.
Thus nature's human link and endless thrall,
Proud man, still seems the enemy of all.

Two butterflies went out at noon
by Emily Dickinson

Two butterflies went out at noon
And waltzed above a stream,
Then stepped straight through the
firmament
And rested on a beam;
And then together bore away
Upon a shining sea,
Though never yet, in any port,
Their coming mentioned be.
If spoken by the distant bird,
If met in ether sea
By frigate or by merchantman,
Report was not to me.

Phenology Calendar



Keep track of nature observations in your area this month, such as temperature changes, extreme weather, garden harvests, foraging finds, and wildlife spotted.

Write them on the date you observe them and draw a picture if you like.

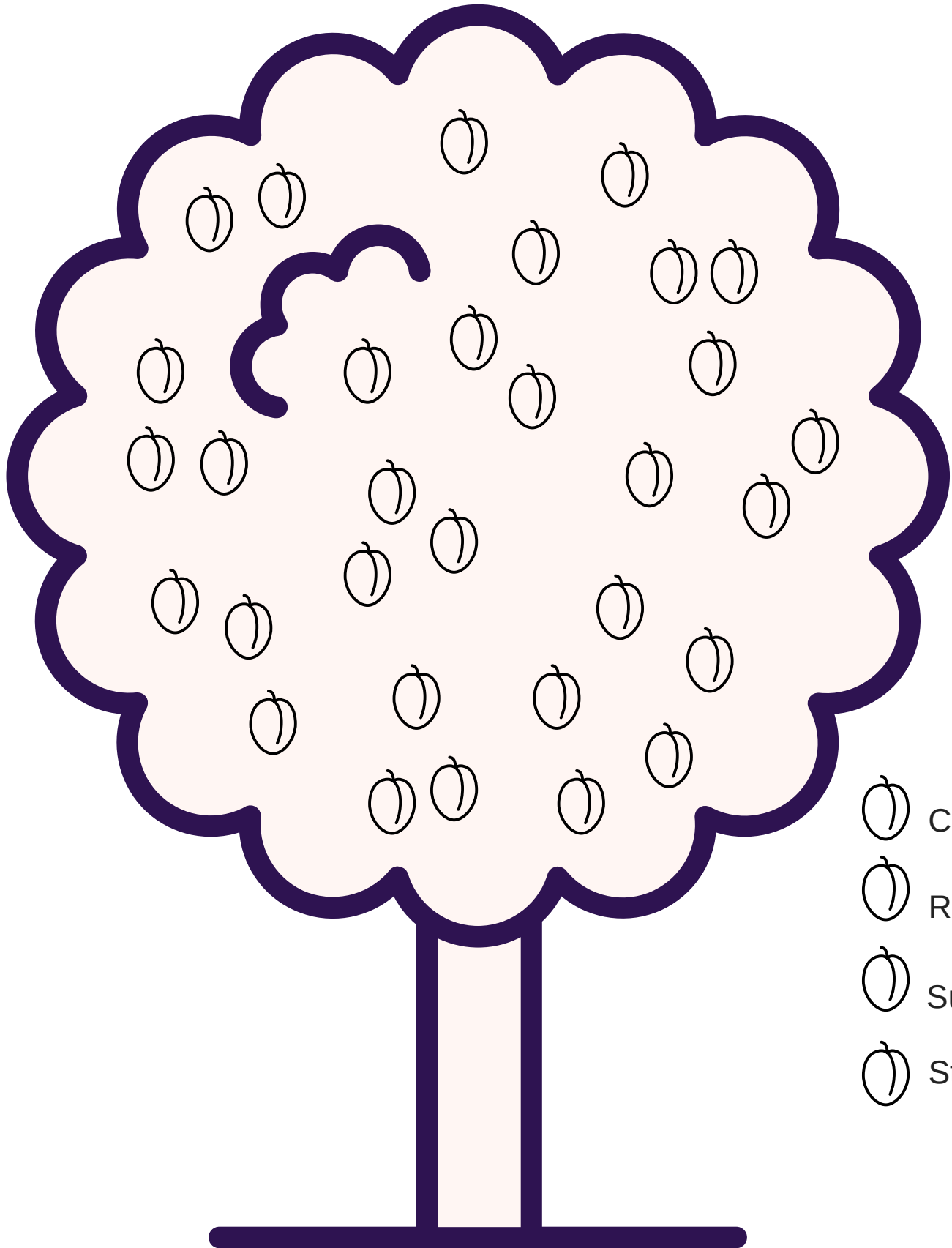
August 2020


<u>SUN</u>	<u>MON</u>	<u>TUE</u>	<u>WED</u>	<u>THU</u>	<u>FRI</u>	<u>SAT</u>
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

My Nature Journal

August

August Weather Tree



-  Cloudy
-  Rainy
-  Sunny
-  Stormy

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



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.