

January 2021

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

Snow
Painting

Name That
Wild Food

All About
Squirrels

Flower
Botanical
Pages

Seasonal poems, activities,
nature journal pages and more!

From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Welcome to a brand new year of Wild Kids Magazine. I hope this year is much better than the last one! I know it will be.

Did you know that in nature, hard times make things stronger and smarter? Scientists have discovered that garden vegetables have more nutrition when they have challenges like pests, droughts and hot weather. Animals learn from challenges and pass on their new strengths to their children. We people get stronger and smarter from hard times too, even though it's no fun going through them. I try to remember that during the tough times. I also remember that every dark night is followed by a sunrise, every winter eventually turns into spring and every storm eventually ends.

This month starts our third year of Wild Kids. This year's botanical coloring pages will feature garden plants. This is a great year to start a garden if you never have, or to make your garden even better! We'll also include lots of foraging information every month for wild plants you can find (even in less than wild places). There will also be the other regulars like seasonal ways to get out in nature, nature-based crafts and activities, nature-based poems, weather facts and more.

I would love to hear from you this year! If you feel like it, please send me a poem, drawing, story or photo showing something you love about nature. You can also send in questions and requests for future topics in the magazine.

I hope you have a wonderful month, and this is the start of a great year for you and your family.

~Alicia



Try watching "the squirrel channel" from your window this month! We have info on squirrels and what they like to eat in this month's issue.

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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Contact: alicia.bayer@gmail.com

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

Go Wild in January

10 Ways to Learn and Play with Nature this Month

Find natural items outside to make a table centerpiece

Make a snow or sand sculpture

Try to ID tracks in the snow, sand or mud

Make a 2021 Nature Bucket List

Look for fallen branches or sticks to do a craft with

Have each family member guess January's lowest and highest temperatures and see who comes closest

Take a thermos of hot cocoa and watch the sunrise or sunset

Feed the squirrels (we have some suggestions in this issue)

Write a 3-line nature haiku each day this month

Find seeds outside and try growing them in pots on a windowsill

SNOW PAINTING!

Here's a fun way to have fun with snow even if it's too cold or stormy to get outside. Bring a bucket of it inside and do some arts and crafts with it!

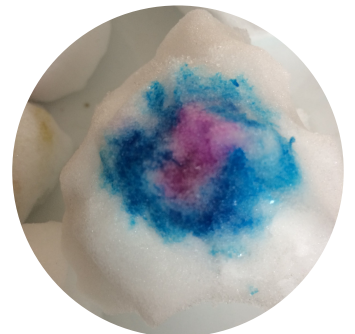
All you need to do is grab a dish pan or other waterproof container and fill it with some fresh snow.

You can use water tinted with food coloring or liquid watercolors with eyedroppers to drizzle all kinds of colorful designs onto the snow.

You can use watercolor paints and a paintbrush to paint snowballs and other packed snow.

When you're done, you can toss your colorful snow outside to make the yard look fun or just melt it down the drain. Watercolors and food coloring are nontoxic so they won't hurt wildlife or plants under the snow.

No snow? If you have a high powered blender with an ice crushing mode, you can make fake snow to pretend!



NAME THAT WILD FOOD

How many wild foods can you identify? Here are 20 common wild edible foods. Can you match the plants to their names?

A Wood sorrel

B Dandelion

C Nettle

D Purslane

E Blueberries

F Wild Asparagus

G Gooseberries

H Chickweed

I Mulberries

J Lambsquarters

K Elderberries

L Raspberries

























(Answers on the back page.)

Falling for Squirrels



Lots of people feed the squirrels at their homes, whether they mean to or not! Some people put out food in bird feeders and try to keep squirrels away, but squirrels are very clever and very agile. They can outwit even the most squirrel-proof feeders!

Sometimes it's fun to put out feeders and watch the squirrels do acrobatics to get to the food. Some people even make elaborate contraptions so they can be entertained by the squirrels. The squirrels even seem to enjoy the challenge, just like we enjoy doing crossword puzzles or obstacle courses.

Some people train squirrels to eat from their hands. Don't try that at home, though, as you could get bit! Using feeders is safer for you and the squirrels.

Here are some of the best foods to put out for squirrels:

- Nuts like acorns, hazelnuts, walnuts and chestnuts
- Dried corn cobs (wire cages keep them from being stolen)
- Peanuts
- Sunflower seeds
- Chopped carrots
- Pumpkin seeds



Fun Facts About Squirrels

- There are over 200 different species of squirrels, including kinds of tree, ground and flying squirrels (who don't actually fly but glide).
- The word squirrel comes from the Greek word Skiouros, which means "shadow tail."
- Some squirrels can run up to 20 miles per hour and some squirrels can jump 20 feet. Flying squirrels can jump up to 150 feet!
- Squirrels are native to every continent except Antarctica and Australia.
- Squirrels belong to the family of mammal rodents called Sciuridae that also includes chipmunks, woodchucks, prairie dogs and marmots.
- Squirrels mostly eat seeds and nuts but they are omnivores, which means they eat both plants and meat. Other foods that they like are fruits, mushrooms, insects, eggs, small animals, flowers of trees, caterpillars, tree bark, roots and even young snakes. They also gnaw on antlers and bones to get calcium that they need.
- Squirrels bury nuts to eat later when food is scarce. Their sense of smell is so good that they usually recover about 80% of the nuts they bury! The nuts that they forget about often sprout into trees, which makes squirrels important in sustaining and expanding ecosystems.
- Squirrels warn each other of dangers by flicking their tails and making warning calls. When they are frightened, they run back and forth and in different directions to confuse their predators.
- Most tree-dwelling squirrels prefer to live alone but they will sometimes live together during very cold weather. They build their nests out of leaves and twigs high in trees, or use tree cavities as dens.
- Any mammal can get rabies, but there is no recorded case of a person ever getting rabies from a squirrel. Squirrels can carry diseases like salmonella but they don't usually give diseases to people or pets.
- If baby squirrels are orphaned, nearby squirrels will adopt them.
- Squirrels remember people who are nice to them. When people regularly feed squirrels in their yards or the park, the squirrels recognize them and often show excitement at seeing them.

THIS YEAR BOTANICAL FLOWER PAGES

Every year in Wild Kids Magazine, we include botanical coloring pages by Elizabeth Blackwell, who drew them hundreds of years ago to teach people and help her family.

The first year, we featured wild edible plants. The second year, we featured herbs. This year, we're featuring flowers.

All flowers are useful, as they all help pollinators (bees and other insects) and they all help plants reproduce and make new plants. They're also useful in so many other ways, though!

Some flowers, like dandelions and elderflowers, are edible. You can use them in baking, drinks, jellies and more. Some flowers, like yarrow (and elderflowers again), are medicinal. You can use them to treat wounds and make medicines.

Some flowers, like foxgloves, are poisonous but can be used to make medicines that can save people's lives. Some flowers like hibiscus can be used not just for foods and drinks but for crafts (remember when we made hibiscus bubbles a few months ago?). And flowers are also just beautiful and they make us feel happy when we look at them, which is really important in life too.

Some of the flowers we feature will be flowers you can find in the wild and some will be ones you can grow in your garden. Others can even be grown inside as houseplants.

What's your favorite flower? If you were a flower, which one would you be? What do you love most about flowers?



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 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.

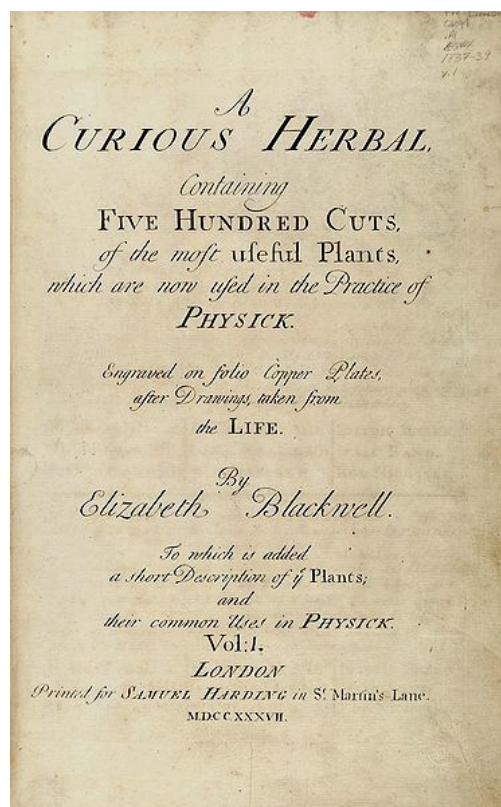
Elizabeth had been trained as an artist and she began drawing and engraving botanical illustrations of helpful plants. She didn't have any training as a botanist (an expert in plants) but she learned everything she needed to and found people to help her. Her husband wrote the descriptions of each plant 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 publish two of Ms. Blackwell's illustrations. You can color them if you like, or just collect them to help identify them (sometimes it helps to trace over them in a dark pen). 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 the first post on our web site for some good links. She was a very strong, talented woman!

Thank you, Elizabeth Blackwell!



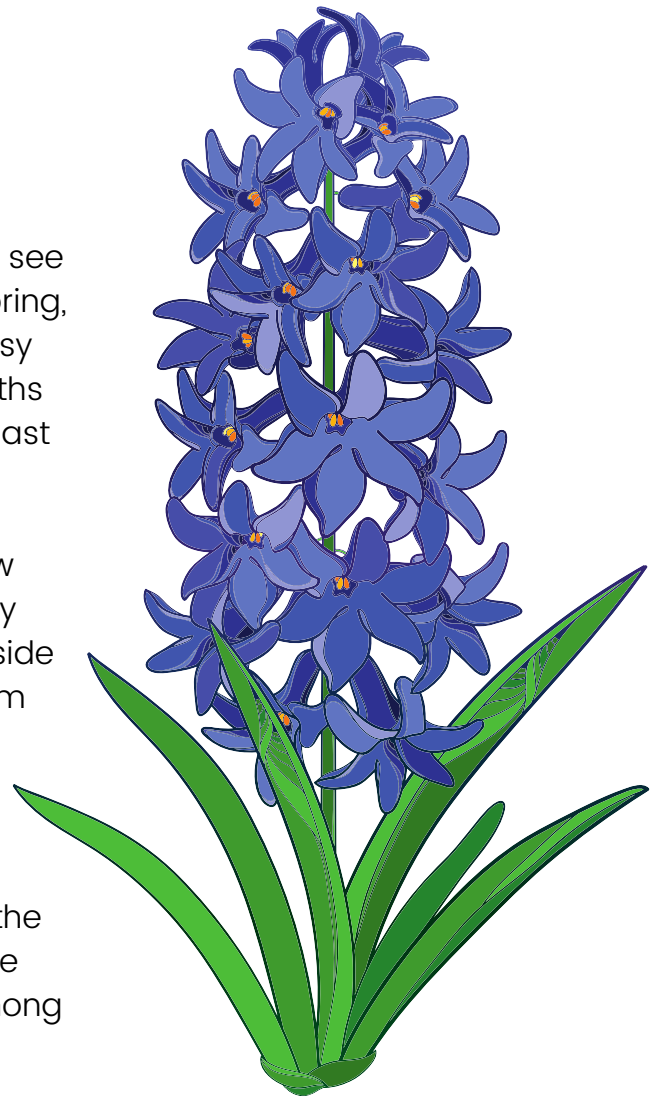
HYACINTH

HYACINTHUS

Hyacinths are such wonderful flowers! You often see them in grocery stores in late winter and early spring, blooming in pots. That's because they're very easy to "force" or get to bloom inside during cold months (remember we talked about how to force bulbs last fall).

I used to always buy potted hyacinths when I saw them in grocery stores in the winter, because they are such a cheerful way to bring some nature inside and remember that spring is coming. They bloom for a long time, and they fill your whole house or apartment with their lovely scent.

Many people grow hyacinths in their yards and gardens, where they come up year after year in the spring. You can also find wild hyacinths, which are sometimes called bluebells or nodding squill, among other names.



Hyacinths are toxic -- DO NOT EAT THEM.

Sometimes people can get an allergic reaction on their skin from touching hyacinths, too.

Like all plants, it has uses though. In olden times, people used the bulbs for starch to make stiff collars, to glue feathers to arrows, and to glue book covers, among other uses. It was also used to make perfumes. One of the biggest reasons hyacinths have been so popular for so long is just that they are so pretty and easy to grow.

Remember, you can pot up your own hyacinth bulbs in the fall and store them somewhere cold for a few months to inexpensively force your own. But if you didn't get a chance to do that, you can get one at your local grocery store for a few dollars and have a little spring garden inside no matter where you live or what it's like outside.

Did you know...

Many popular garden flowers are poisonous. You'll often see more poisonous plants in people's flower gardens than in the wild.

HYACINTH



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

ARTICHOKE

CYNARA SCOLYMUS

***Let's grow and eat
some thistle buds!***



Have you ever eaten an artichoke? They are some of our family's favorite treats! I was born in California where they grow a lot of artichokes, and I have happy memories of my mother buying artichokes and steaming them so we could dip the leaves in melted butter and scrape them with our teeth. We'd get to the "heart" with its bristling hairs to protect it, and carefully scrape them off to dip it in butter and eat it up. The heart is the tastiest part of the whole artichoke and some people buy just the hearts to use on pizzas and in things like spinach artichoke dip.

Artichokes are very nutritious. They are full of fiber and vitamins. Some people also make a healing tea out of the leaves (not the parts on the flower bud we eat, but the plant's real leaves). We've also used the cooking water to color homemade playdough since it's a really pretty blue green.

You can grow artichokes in your garden even if you live in a colder climate. Those of us who live in chilly areas need to start the seeds all the way in January and then put out the plants in the warmth of spring. People who live in places that are warm all year can grow them in their yards as perennials (plants that come back year after year). Some people let some of their artichokes bloom in their gardens because they have such pretty flowers.

Artichokes are in the thistle family and the parts that we eat are the flower buds. Can you see the similarity below?



Did you know...

After you eat an artichoke, other foods taste sweeter than usual. This is caused by a chemical reaction in two chemicals found in artichokes, chologenic acid and cynarin. The cynarin blocks taste buds that detect sweet flavors. When you eat or drink something after eating an artichoke, it washes away the cynarin, causing your taste buds to detect an extreme contrast in sweetness, which your brain perceives as an overwhelmingly sweet taste.



ARTICHOKE



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

Poems for January

"January is the quietest month in the garden... But just because it looks quiet doesn't mean that nothing is happening. The soil, open to the sky, absorbs the pure rainfall while microorganisms convert tilled-under fodder into usable nutrients for the next crop of plants. The feasting earthworms tunnel along, aerating the soil and preparing it to welcome the seeds and bare roots to come."

- Rosalie Muller Wright, Editor of Sunset Magazine

Jack Frost
By Gabriel Setoun

The door was shut, as doors should be,
Before you went to bed last night;
Yet Jack Frost has got in, you see,
And left your window silver white.
He must have waited till you slept;
And not a single word he spoke,
But pencilled o'er the panes and crept
Away again before you woke.
And now you cannot see the hills
Nor fields that stretch beyond the lane;
But there are fairer things than these
His fingers traced on every pane.



The Bells
Edgar Allen Poe

Hear the sledges with the bells --
 Silver bells!
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
 How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
 In the icy air of night!
 While the stars that oversprinkle
 All the heavens, seem to twinkle
 With a crystalline delight;
 Keeping time, time, time,
 In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
 From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells --
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

January
By Winifred C. Marshall,

*Little January
Tapped at my door today.
And said, "Put on your winter wraps,
And come outdoors to play."*

*Little January
Is always full of fun;
Until the set of sun.*

*Little January
Will stay a month with me
And we will have such jolly times -
Just come along and see.*

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

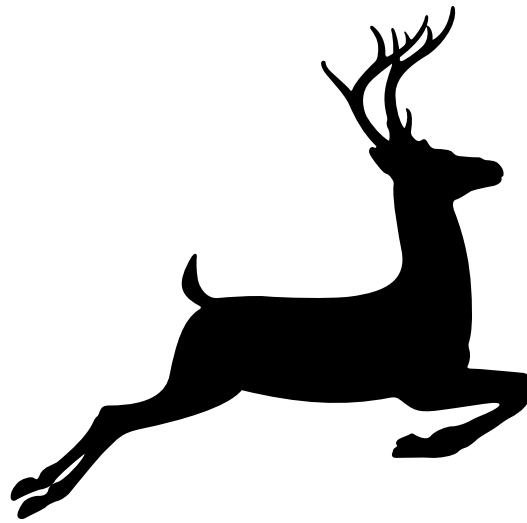


Week 3 Sketches & Observations



Week 4 Sketches & Observations





Answers to the wild edible foods match up:

D K J F

L G H B

A C E I

Want to see your stuff in Wild Kids?

We welcome articles, photos, artwork and other submissions from kids and their grown ups.

Send your submissions, letters or to alicia.bayer@gmail.com