

April 2021

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a small, brown and black spotted frog. The frog is perched on the palm, facing towards the right. The background is a soft-focus green field of grass. Overlaid on the image are five light blue teardrop-shaped callouts containing text.

Foraging
wild spring
greens

April
Phenology
Calendar

Take
the Kids'
Foraging
Pledge

April
Night Sky
Wheel

Seasonal poems,
activities, nature
journal pages &
more

From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Hello April!

What is the weather like where you live right now?
What are you hoping to do outside this month?

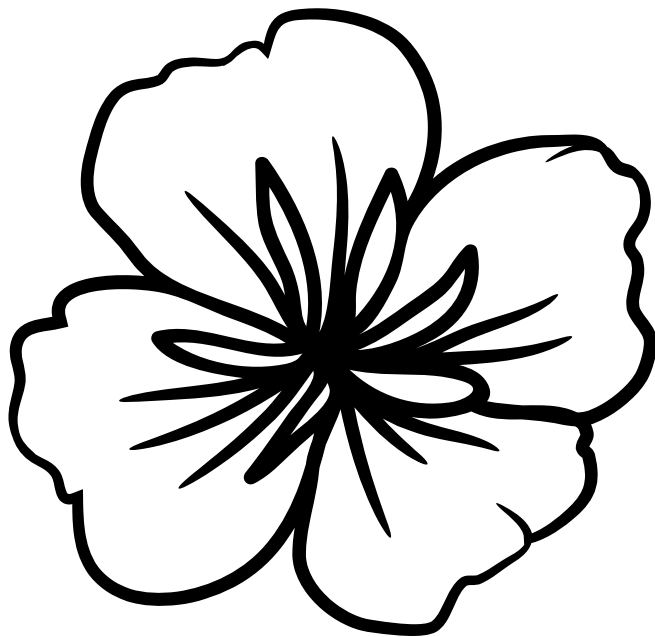
Here in Minnesota we will probably have a mix of warm and cold days. We'll probably still have some more snow this year but we'll also have some hot days and lots of rain and mud! We're planting frost-tolerant veggies like peas, potatoes and lettuce, and doing lots of hiking at nearby state parks.

I'm itching to clean up our gardens, but we leave the dried stalks and dead leaves on the ground until the days are consistently warm because so many bees and other beneficial insects make their homes there over the winter. We want to give them time to wake up and move somewhere safe for the new season. It's better for the plants if we're a little more patient too.

This is one of our favorite foraging months, since so many wonderful spring greens appear all around us this month. Some of our favorite plants to forage this month are ramps, nettles and morel mushrooms. Soon we'll be enjoying violets, dandelion flowers and wild asparagus, too.

What are you hoping to do in nature this month? I hope you have a wild, wonderful time!

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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Contact: aliciabayer@gmail.com

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

Go Wild in April

10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

Go on a family walk after dark and see how many nocturnal animals you can see or hear

Look for spring wild greens (we teach you about some in this issue)

Start a container garden on your roof, balcony or elsewhere outside with fun veggies like cherry tomatoes

Press a wildflower between waxed paper in the pages of a book

Fly a kite!

Scatter native wildflower seeds somewhere that could use some beauty

Find a field of clover (there may even be some in your grass) & see if you can find any four leaf clovers

Find a wetland area and try to hear some "spring peepers" (frogs singing to each other)

Explore a park you've never been to

Pick some dandelion blossoms (from an area that has not been sprayed), snip off the green sepals & add them to pancake batter for a fun breakfast

Wild Edible Spring Greens

Spring is when wild greens seem to appear out of nowhere and it's the best time to forage many of them.

Some greens like dandelion leaves will get very bitter once they form flowers and live through some hot days, so they are best eaten when they are very young (they are still kind of bitter then, but you can mix them with other flavors to make them stand out less and the bitter components are really good for your health).

Some greens like lambs quarters will get woody (the stem will get thick and hard) later on, but they are mild and tender in the spring and you can use them in any dish that uses spinach (later in the year, just use the leaves -- they won't get bitter even in the heat of summer, unlike most greens in your garden like lettuce).

Nettles are legendary for how healthy they are for you, and in the old days people would forage them as soon as they appeared to help them get over all of their aches and sicknesses left over from the winter. Make sure you remember why they call them stinging nettles though! I once knew a little girl who could forage nettles with her bare hands without getting stung, but nobody in our family can do that! Always wear heavy gloves when gathering nettles. The "sting" goes away once they are cooked or even blended in a high powered blender. They have a mild taste and we use them lots in soups, casseroles and even tea.

Never forage anywhere that's been sprayed with pesticides or herbicides, or near sources of pollution like factories, railroad tracks or highways.



Wild Edible Spring Greens

Here are a few of the wonderful wild greens that are common in spring. There are many more, but these are all ones that our family has foraged and that we enjoy.



Lambsquarters: Also called goosefoot, this garden weed tastes like spinach and is good in smoothies, soups and casseroles. We like it better than spinach, actually!



Violets: The leaves and flowers are both edible. The leaves are really good for you and are great in salads. You can eat them year-round but harvest when they're in bloom for easier ID.



Purslane: The leaves are crunchy and lemony, and they are really high in Omega 3 fats. We like them in sandwiches or wraps.



Nettles: These are some of the healthiest wild plants and are also tasty in soups, casseroles and even smoothies. Wear gloves and either cook or blend in a blender to avoid painful stings!



Dandelions: The leaves are very healthy but bitter. Harvest when they are very young and small, and before flowering.



Garlic mustard: This invasive plant harms lots of natural places so you help nature by foraging it. It's somewhat bitter, but it's milder in spring when it's young and small. Many people like it sauteed with butter and some people add it to pesto.



Chickweed: This common lawn weed is good in salads, pesto and sandwiches.



Ramps: These early spring leaves taste of garlic and onion. If they are not super abundant in your area, only harvest one leaf from each plant as they are very slow to grow and reproduce. Be sure you know how to tell the difference between ramps and poisonous lily-of-the-valley (we talked about them last month in the March 2021 issue).



Miner's lettuce: This mild, crunchy plant has been called the iceberg lettuce of foraging. It's great in salads or it can be boiled like spinach.

Be sure to always look at lots of ID sources to be sure you have properly identified any plant before you eat it, and always just eat just a little bit the first time in case you have a reaction.

The Kids' Foraging Pledge

**Do you know how to forage safely and ethically?
Take our pledge to become a model forager.**

☐

I will make sure I have permission to forage .

Many parks allow foraging for personal use, especially of fruits, berries and mushrooms. Some parks welcome foraging of invasive species like garlic mustard. If you're on private land, make sure you have permission.

☐

I will not pick a plant unless I know what it is.

Some plants are poisonous and some can cause painful rashes and burns if you touch them. Some are endangered and some are illegal to harvest. Always make sure you know what a plant is and that it is safe and legal to forage it before you touch it.

☐

I will only take a small amount, only as much as I need.

Remember that wildlife relies on these plants for their food too! Leave plenty so the plant population stays sustainable, other than with invasive species.

☐

I will minimize damage to the plants and area.

Don't trample other plants when you forage. Take care to forage in ways that don't damage plants. For instance, take one or two leaves of each plant and leave the rest. It does not harm a plant to take its fruits, seeds and berries, so that's generally better than foraging for parts like roots that will kill the plant. Again, it's generally fine to take whole plants when they are invasive, as that can actually help the other plants in the area.

☐

I will never eat a wild plant without knowing 100% what it is.

Lots of plants have lookalikes that are poisonous, especially berries and mushrooms. Never, ever eat a wild plant when you aren't absolutely certain about it.

☐

I will always try just a little of a new plant the first time.

People can be allergic to any food, including wild foods. Taste just a little the first time and then wait a day to see if you have any reaction. If you are allergic to a food, don't eat wild foods in the same family (for instance, sorrel and rhubarb are both in the buckwheat family).

☐

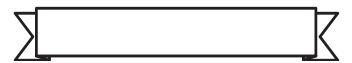
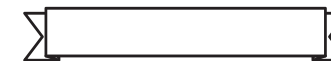
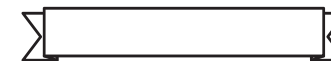
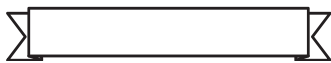
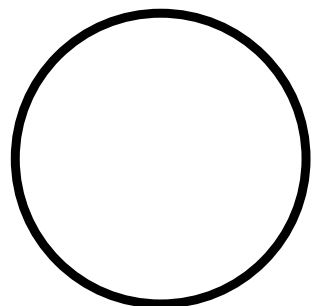
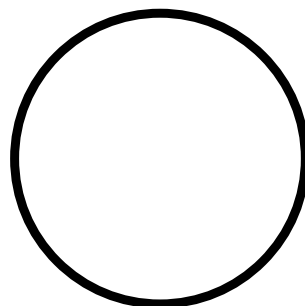
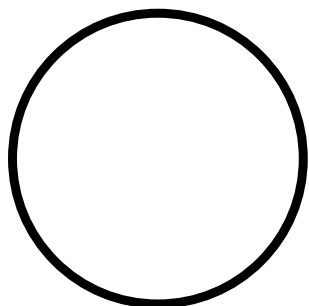
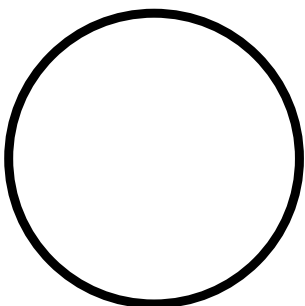
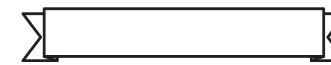
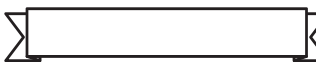
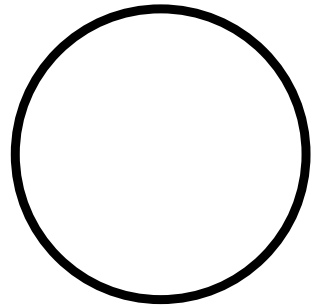
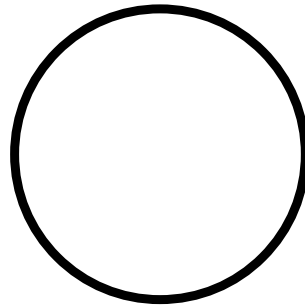
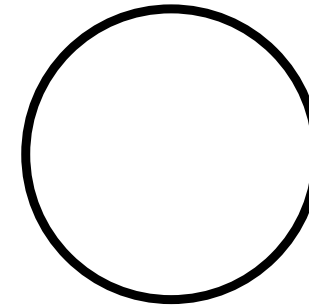
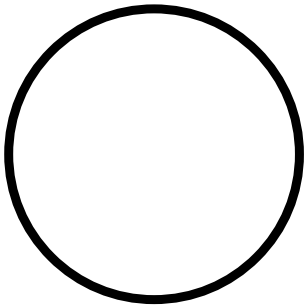
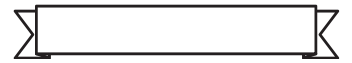
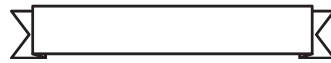
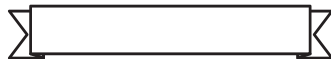
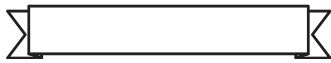
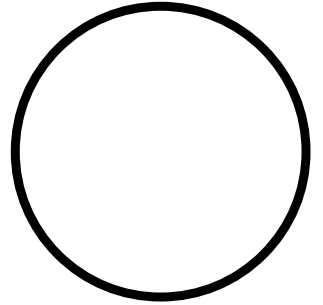
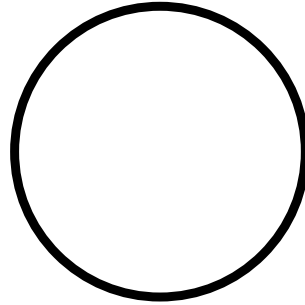
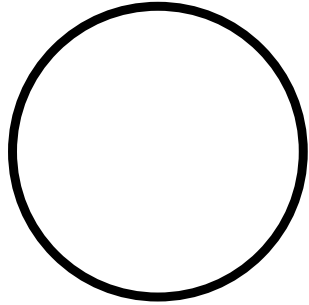
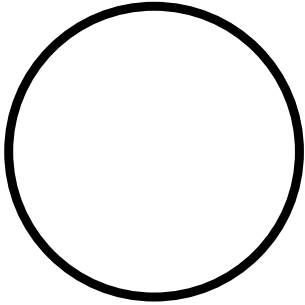
I will do my best to protect wildlife and nature.

Nature cares for us in many ways but it also needs us! Help protect the plants, animals and other living things that we share our wonderful world with.

Signed: _____

Nature in my Neighborhood

What helpful parts of nature can you find in your neighborhood? Wild greens that are edible? Bats that eat mosquitoes? Spiders that protect your garden from pests? Flowers that give you beauty and help the bees? Draw pictures of them and write their names underneath.



April Poetry

"Snow in April is abominable," said Anne. "Like a slap in the face when you expected a kiss."

~ L.M. Montgomery, Anne of Ingleside

Over The Land Is April
by Robert Louis Stevenson

Over the land is April,
Over my heart a rose;
Over the high, brown mountain
The sound of singing goes.
Say, love, do you hear me,
Hear my sonnets ring?
Over the high, brown mountain,
Love, do you hear me sing?

By highway, love, and byway
The snows succeed the rose.
Over the high, brown mountain
The wind of winter blows.
Say, love, do you hear me,
Hear my sonnets ring?
Over the high, brown mountain
I sound the song of spring,
I throw the flowers of spring.
Do you hear the song of spring?
Hear you the songs of spring?

The first of April, some do say,
Is set apart for All Fools' Day.
But why the people call it so,
Nor I, nor they themselves do know.
But on this day are people sent
On purpose for pure merriment.

- Poor Robin's Almanac, 1790



April's Charms
by William Henry Davies

When April scatters charms of primrose gold
Among the copper leaves in thickets old,
And singing skylarks from the meadows rise,
To twinkle like black stars in sunny skies;

When I can hear the small woodpecker ring
Time on a tree for all the birds that sing;
And hear the pleasant cuckoo, loud and long --
The simple bird that thinks two notes a song;

When I can hear the woodland brook, that could
Not drown a babe, with all his threatening mood;
Upon these banks the violets make their home,
And let a few small strawberry vlossoms come:

When I go forth on such a pleasant day,
One breath outdoors takes all my cares away;
It goes like heavy smoke, when flames take hold
Of wood that's green and fill a grate with gold.

LILY

Take care: Lilies can be toxic to cats



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

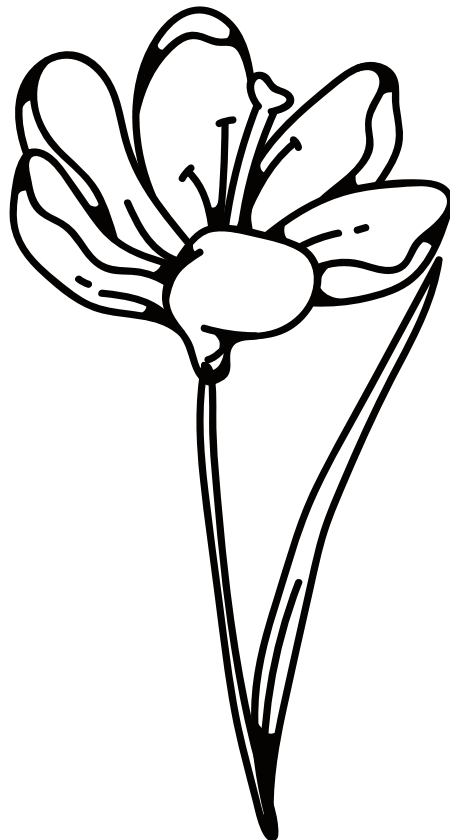
PRIMROSE



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

April



Phenology Calendar

Keep track of all of the nature firsts or memorable weather that you see this month!

You can write them in that day's square or draw a picture.

Here are some examples.

- First dragonflies seen
- Mourning cloak butterfly spotted
- First ladybug spotted
- Spring peepers (frogs) heard
- First earthworms spotted
- Ducks nesting
- Wild ginger emerging
- First garter snake spotted
- Eastern meadowlark spotted
- First trillium in bloom
- Choke cherries blooming
- Red winged blackbirds heard
- 80 degree high temp
- 3 inches snow



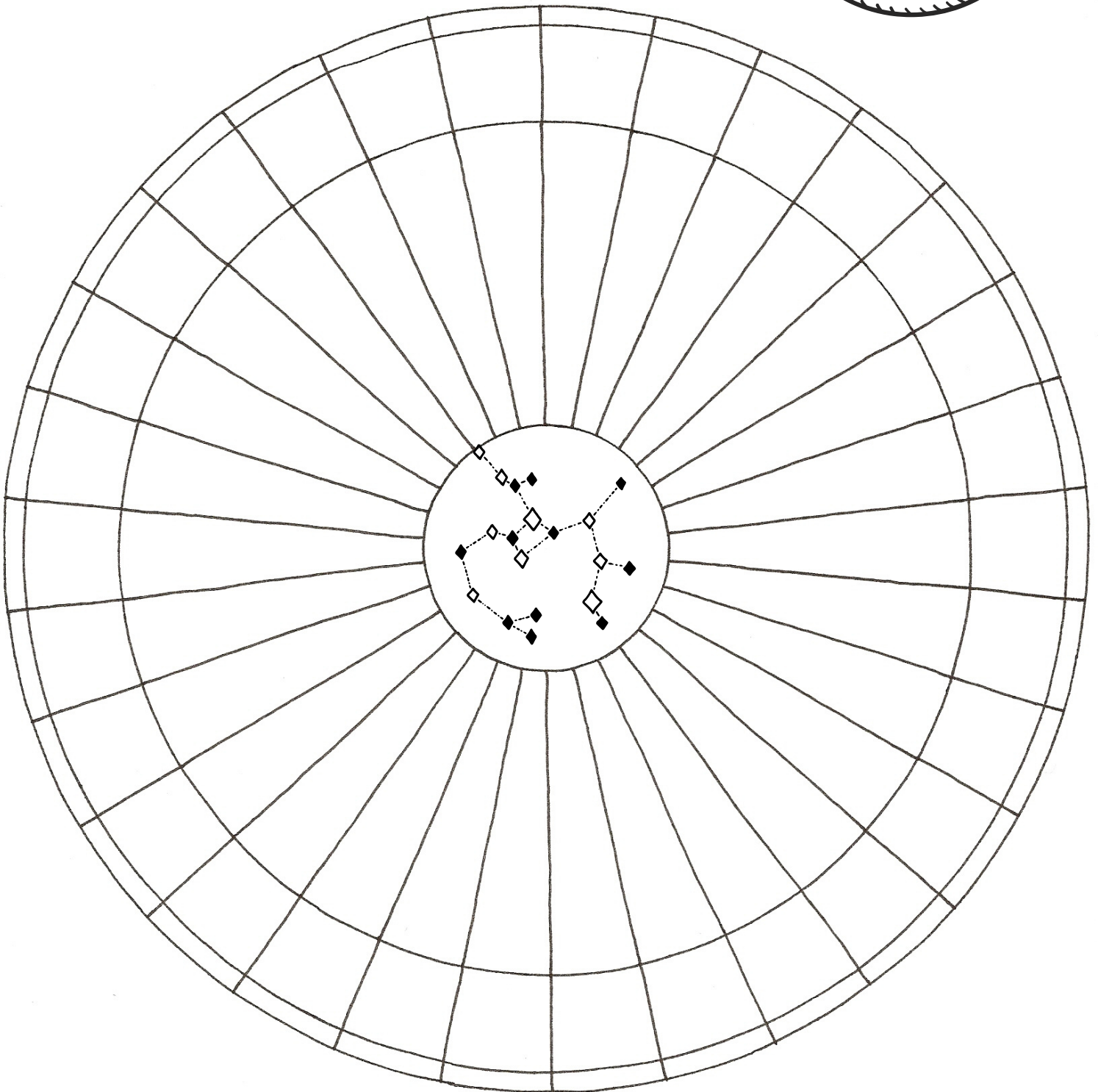
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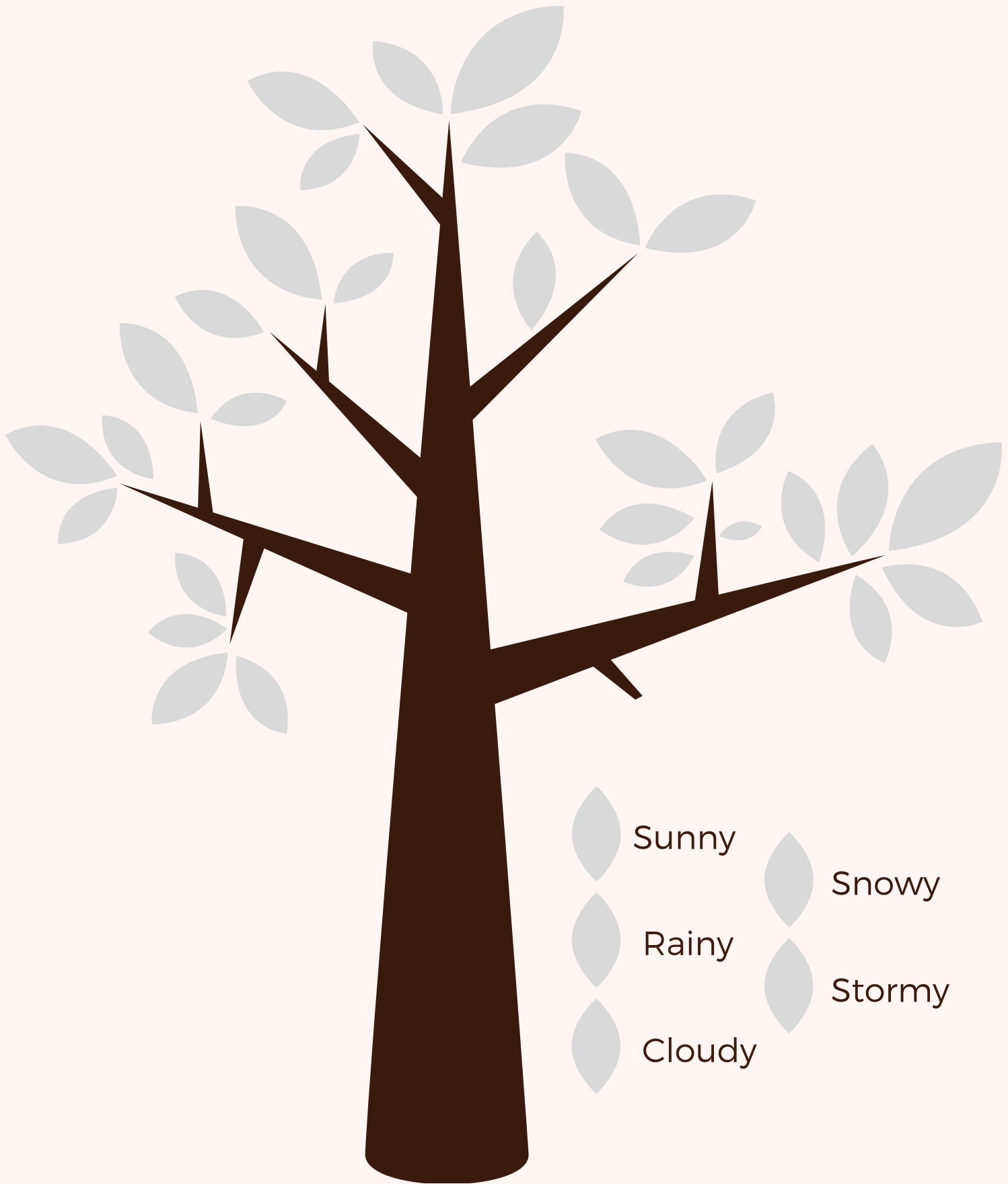
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				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

April Night Skies

Each night this month, look out the window or head outside and look at the sky. Then draw or color a square on the wheel to show what it looked like. Was there a full moon or a crescent? Could you see stars? Or was it all dark from cloud cover. At the end of the month you'll have a visual memory of the whole month's nights!



April Weather Tree



April Bird List

Birds spotted this month

April Animal List

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month

April 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!

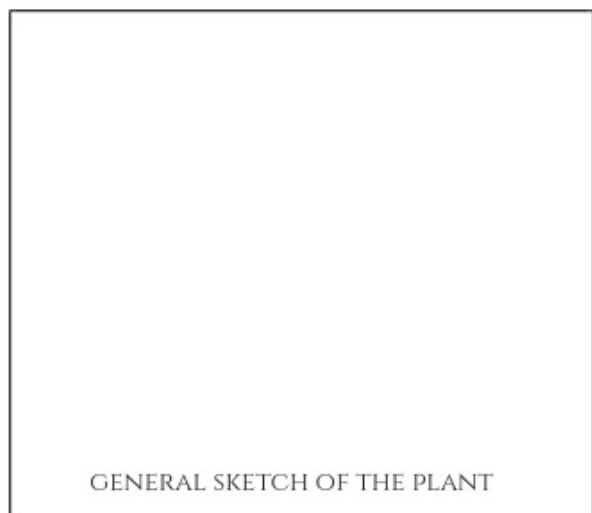
Week 1 Observations

Week 2 Observations

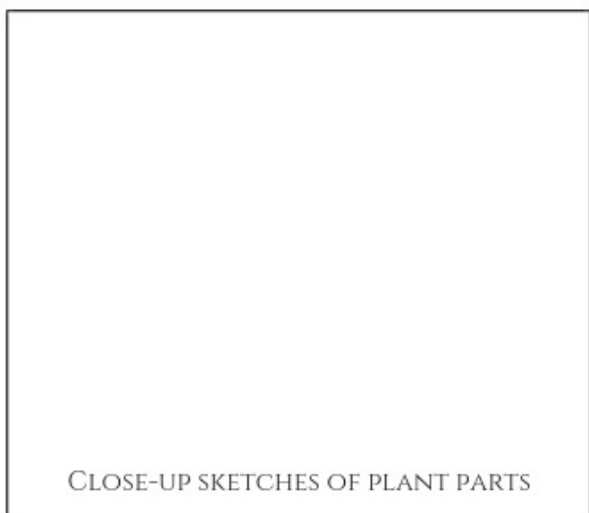
Week 3 Observations

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

or email photographs, artwork, letters or other submissions to alicia.bayer@gmail.com