

May 2021

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

**10 Great
Ways to Use
Marigolds**

**Nature Up
Close!**

**Peony
Science!**

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



From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Happy May!

How are you planning on spending time in nature this month?

May has always been one of my favorite months. It's the month where spring is finally here full-time (mostly) in Minnesota and lots of flowers are blooming in our gardens. It's also when some of our favorite wild foods are plentiful to forage -- wild asparagus, morel mushrooms, violets, nettles and many more. The world seems bright green here and the weather is just the right balance of hot and cool. What is it like where you live?

If you plant a garden, there are probably lots of plants and seeds you can plant this month. The best times to plant vary by where you live, but May is a good month to plant garden seeds of one kind or another just about anywhere (even for those of you who are in autumn now).

In this month's Wild Kids Magazine we have some fun stuff about looking at nature up close with a pocket scope, magnifying glass or magnifying app, some fun projects using peonies for science (and jelly!), 10 great ways to use marigolds, all about calendulas and marigolds, ways to have fun in nature this month and all the usual nature journal pages, seasonal poetry and more.

I hope you find something fun to try this month and that you have a wonderful, wild May!

Alicia



Our youngest child, Fiona, foraging violet flowers for violet syrup in May 2019

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 May

10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

Draw, paint or photograph something alive in your yard or neighborhood each day

Make May Day baskets and leave them on neighbors' doors (we have directions in the May 2020 issue)

Dress up in fun outfits and have a photo shoot somewhere pretty outside

Gather edible wild greens for a salad (toss in violet flowers if you find them too!)

Climb a tree with a friend or family member

Look at pond water, sand & other things in nature through a pocket scope (you can buy them online for under \$10)

Make peony jelly or do some other peony science (we tell you how in this issue)

Plant some marigold seeds to do some fun flower projects this summer

Paint or draw a nature scene send it to Wild Kids!

Find a big grassy area and play frisbee, soccer or another fun sport

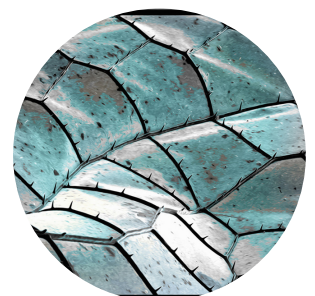
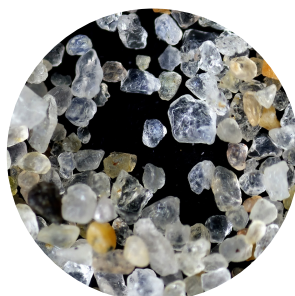
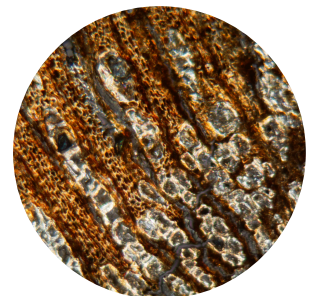
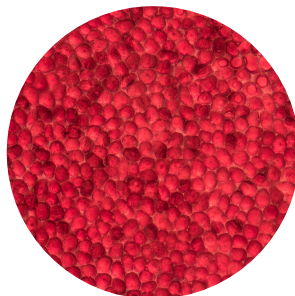
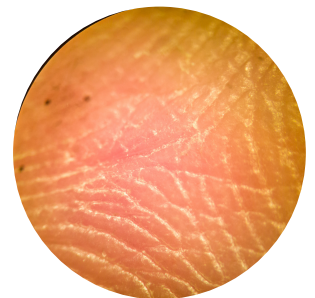
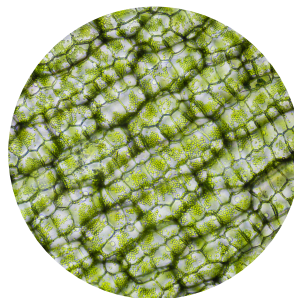
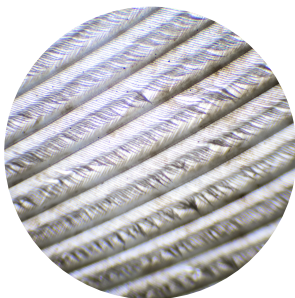
Nature Up Close

It's so fun to look at natural items through a microscope, pocket scope, a phone app or even a dollar store magnifying glass.

When we really look at items from nature we can see how cleverly they're designed, and notice things we might not have ever noticed otherwise.

See if you can figure out what each of these items is and then head out to have an up-close look at some things from your neighborhood.

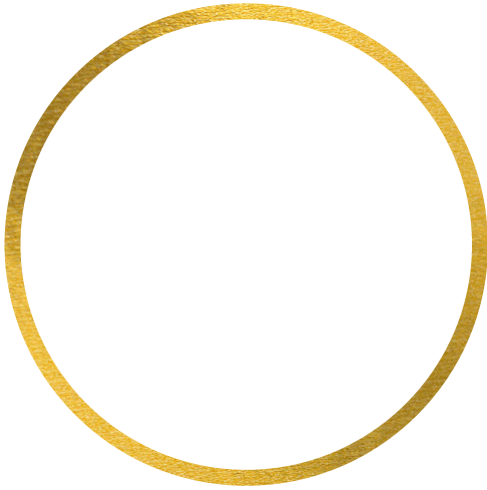
If you don't have access to anything that magnifies, just get really close and draw what you see.

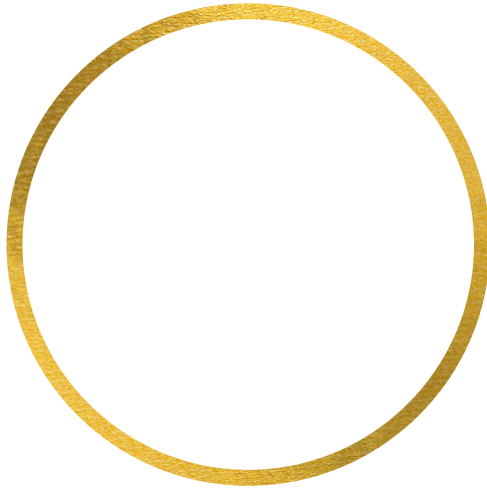


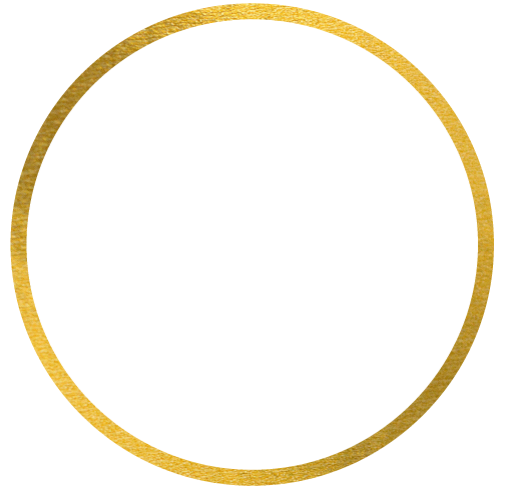
Answers on the next page.

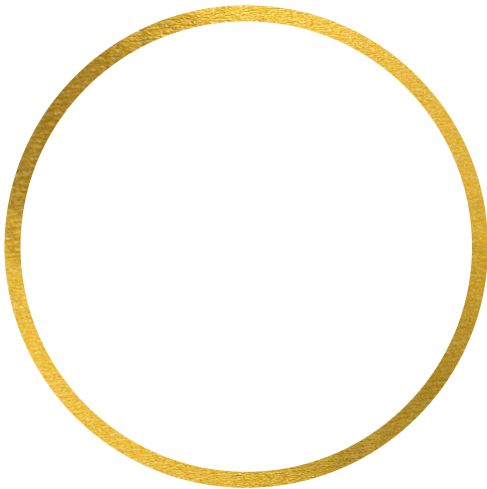
Nature Up Close

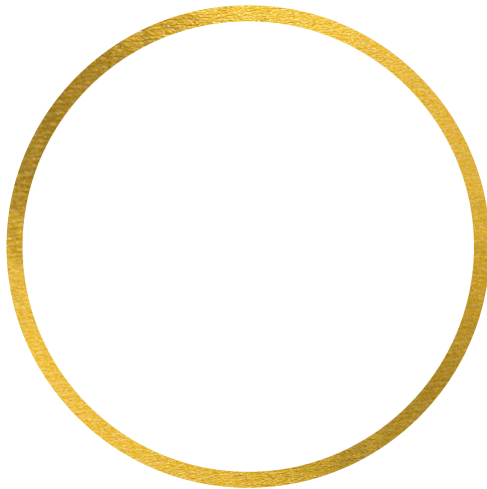
Draw or paint natural items you find around your home!
They don't have to be microscopic – just get close and draw what you see.

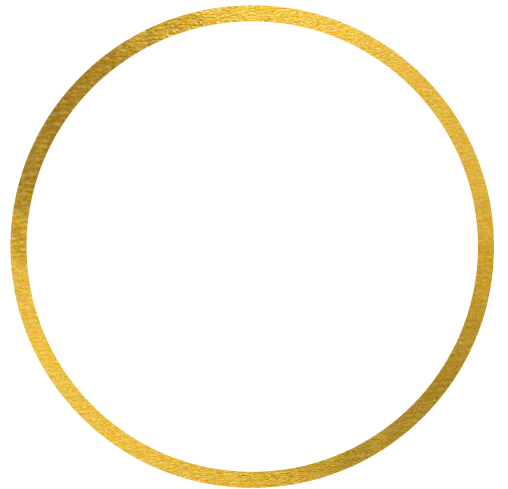












Answers for up close images on the last page:
feather, leaf, ant, finger
flower petal, butterfly wing, salt, bark
sand, bee wing, wool, dragonfly wing

PEONY SCIENCE!

When the peonies bloom in late spring and early summer, it's a great opportunity to do some nature science.

Here are some fantastic ways to do nature studies and learn all sorts of science concepts with peonies.

DELAY BLOOMING FOR UP TO A MONTH

Keep them from blooming in the refrigerator for over a month! You can take unopened peony buds and keep them in the fridge for up to a month. Put dry, unopened peony buds in a plastic bag or newspaper and put them in the refrigerator. When you're ready for them to open, put them in a vase of water at room temperature and they will bloom.

MAKE COLOR-CHANGING PEONY JELLY

This is fun because not only do you get to eat some tasty jelly, but it also seems like magic because the color changes when you make it! When you first start, the color of the juice will be a sad light green until lemon juice is added, at which point it will turn a lovely pinkish-orange. Peonies work as pH indicators (like elderberries and purple cabbage), changing colors depending on how acidic or basic a liquid is, so when you add the acidic lemon juice, the color "magically" changes.

To do: Gather 4 cups peony petals (the brighter or deeper the color, the more colorful your jelly will be), 5 cups of water, one lemon, 3 cups of sugar and one package of liquid pectin (or two tablespoons of powdered pectin).

Boil the petals in the water and cover. Let them steep overnight or for at least 6 hours. Then strain the petals out and add three tablespoons of freshly squeezed lemon juice to the liquid. Bring the liquid to a boil and add the sugar and pectin. Boil for three minutes, then remove from the stove and pour into sterilized jars. Store your jelly in the fridge or can it by processing it in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes.

We have links to learn more about these projects & find others at the Wild Kids website.

Marigolds and Calendula Flowers

There's a lot of confusion with marigolds because the flowers commonly known as "pot marigolds" are not marigolds at all. Those flowers are actually from a different family called calendula. Luckily, marigolds and calendula are all helpful, pretty, nontoxic plants that are easy to grow and great for nature.

In this month's issue, we have fun ways to use marigolds (latin name tagetes). Marigolds are super easy to grow and you can find them in any garden center either as seeds or plants.

In our botanical coloring pages, we have calendulas, which Elizabeth Blackwell (the artist who drew our coloring pages hundreds of years ago) called "Mary golds." Calendulas are famous for being very helpful in skin remedies like homemade lotions. They are also pretty garden flowers that are easy to grow.

Try growing all kinds of marigolds and calendulas. Which are your favorites?



marigolds (tagetes)



pot marigolds (calendula)

10 Great Ways to Use Marigolds

Marigolds are really easy to grow from seeds or from plants. They help us, our gardens, and nature, and they're just pretty and fun! Here are lots of ways to use marigolds.

1. Plant seeds to grow windowsill flowers. Plant marigold seeds in recycled coffee cups. Cover with a bit of soil and keep moist on a sunny windowsill. In about 1-2 weeks you should have tiny plants. Keep them on your windowsill or transplant them to your garden when they're bigger.



2. Plant them in your yard to help butterflies. Marigolds are a host plant for Lepidoptera caterpillars and as a great source of nectar for lots of butterflies



3. Eat them! Marigold petals are known as "poor man's saffron" because the petals can add a pretty golden color to dishes and their petals can be added to salads, quiches and more. Note that all marigold flowers are edible (including calendula or pot marigold) but not all marigold flowers are tasty. Lots of flowers taste kind of bitter, bland or boring even if they look pretty. For best flavor, most people prefer *Tagetes patula* (French marigold), *Tagetes tenuifolia* (Gem marigolds) or *Tagetes lucida* (Mexican mint marigold).

4. Plant them in your vegetable garden to keep insects from eating your veggies. Marigolds are famous "companion plants" for garden veggies like tomatoes because they are said to keep caterpillars and other garden pests from eating nearby veggies. Even rabbits are said to avoid plants that are near them!



Note: When eating a plant that's new to you (from the grocery store, garden or wild), it's important to just try a little bit the first time. People can be sensitive or allergic to plants even if they are edible for most people. Always check on the family that a plant is in too, if you have allergies to other plants. Marigolds are in the same family as asters.

5. Freeze them in ice cubes to use in fancy drinks.

6. Make flower garlands and crowns with them.
(We taught how to make flower crowns in the May 2019 issue of Wild Kids).



7. Use them as chicken feed. Some people feed marigolds to their chickens because not only are they really good for them (and tasty for the chickens) but they help them make yolks that are bright orange-gold.

8. Dry them. Cut the flowers when they're in full bloom and remove the leaves. Hang them upside down in someplace warm and dry like an attic or garage until they're all the way dry. They will shrink a little bit but will keep their pretty colors.



9. Use them for decorations. Put cut flowers in vases or use the flowers on wreaths. You can even use them as decorations on cakes and cupcakes.

10. Dye with them. Lots of people use marigolds to make a lovely yellow dye for wool, cotton, linen and other materials. You can find lots of tutorials online if you'd like to try it yourself.



Remember if you are using marigolds in foods or drinks to only use flowers you grew yourself since flowers from garden centers are often treated with harmful chemicals.

Poems for May

"I thought that spring must last forevermore; For I was young and loved, and it was May."

- Vera Brittain.

Spring in Town

by William Cullen Bryant

The country ever has a lagging Spring,
Waiting for May to call its violets forth,
And June its roses--showers and sunshine bring,
Slowly, the deepening verdure o'er the earth;
To put their foliage out, the woods are slack,
And one by one the singing-birds come back.

Within the city's bounds the time of flowers
Comes earlier. Let a mild and sunny day,
Such as full often, for a few bright hours,
Breathes through the sky of March the airs of May,
Shine on our roofs and chase the wintry gloom--
And lo! our borders glow with sudden bloom."

A swarm of bees in May
Is worth a load of hay;
A swarm of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon;
A swarm of bees in July
Is not worth a fly."

- Rhyme from England

May

by Christina Rossetti

I cannot tell you how it was,
But this I know: it came to pass
Upon a bright and sunny day
When May was young; ah, pleasant May!
As yet the poppies were not born
Between the blades of tender corn;
The last egg had not hatched as yet,
Nor any bird foregone its mate.
I cannot tell you what it was,
But this I know: it did but pass.
It passed away with sunny May,
Like all sweet things it passed away,
And left me old, and cold, and gray.



PEONY

(*Paeonia officinalis*)



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

POT MARIGOLDS/CALENDULA

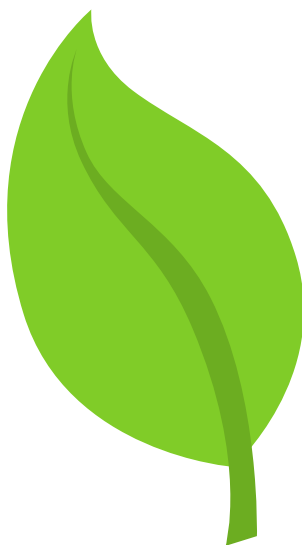
(*Calendula*)



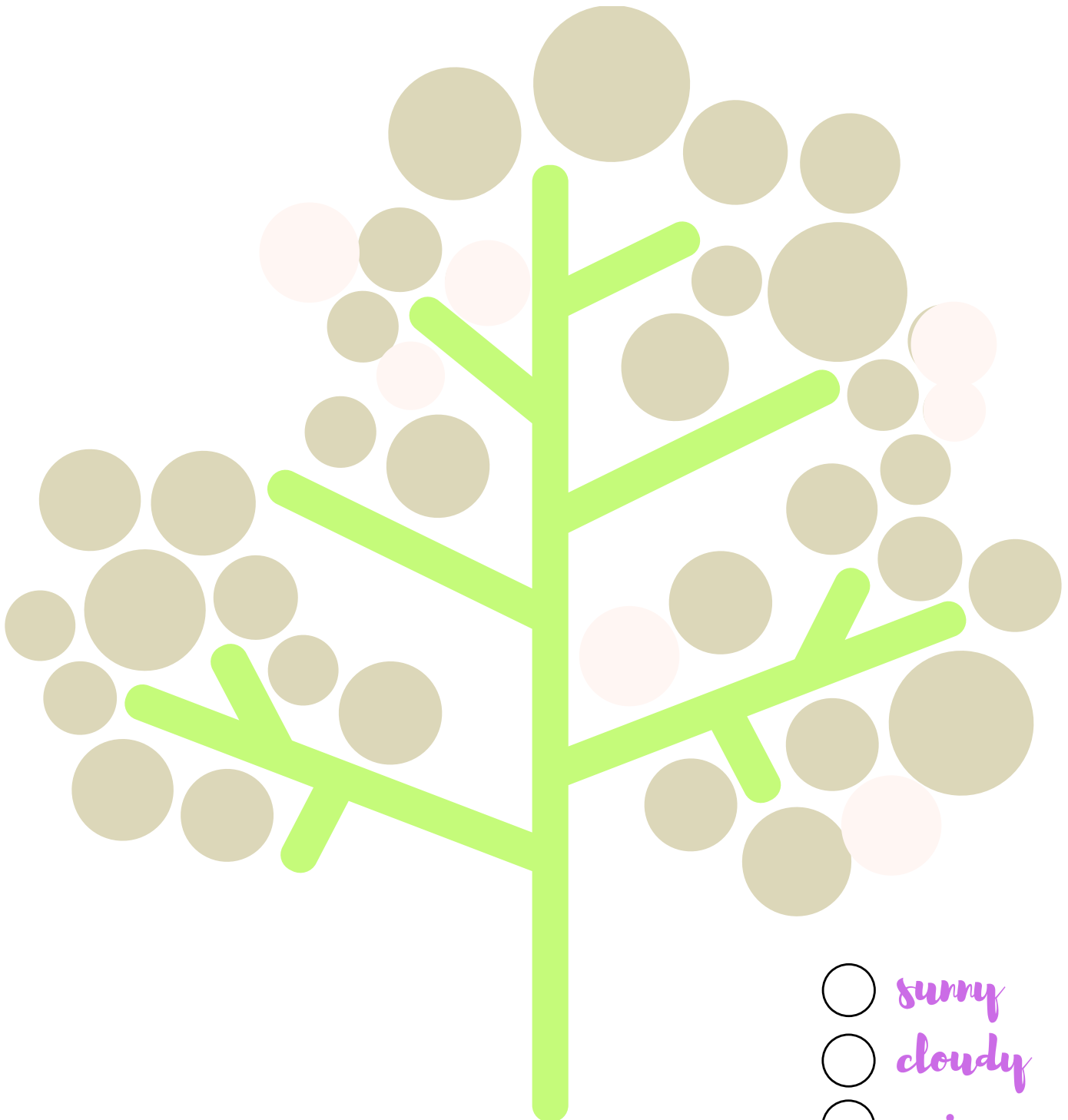
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My Nature Journal

MAY



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

CLOSE-UP SKETCHES OF PLANT PARTS



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.