

December 2021

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

Foraging Flash Cards

Wild Gifts
to Make & Give

Botanical
Flower Gift Tags

Seasonal poems, activities,
nature journal pages and more!



From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

What are you hoping to do in nature this month? Here in Minnesota, it's pretty cold already but we haven't had much real snow yet. That's very unusual for Minnesota! We often have lots of snow by Halloween. The past few years we have had warmer winters and less snow, with lots of extremes like bursts of really cold days and getting lots and lots of snow at once when we do have snow. We try to adapt to whatever weather we get and make the most of it!

We don't forage much this time of year, but there are still lots of wild edible plants that you can forage, especially for people in warmer places. Even in the dead of winter you can find things like pine needles and rose hips for tea (and vitamin C!), bark from some trees for medicine (be sure to harvest it so it doesn't harm the tree), nuts like walnuts and acorns, and nutritious roots like burdock for food and medicine -- if the ground isn't too frozen to dig them up. In some places, mushrooms are still abundant. Seeds like dockseed are usually still pretty easy to find. We've roasted those and made them into flour for crackers that were very tasty. Mix the flour with other milder flours and lots of good flavors or they'll taste a bit like tree bark though! Some kinds of wild greens also grow nearly year round. Sometimes people find ox-eye daisy leaf still growing and green under several inches of snow!

We're hoping to do lots of hiking this month. We will also try to find lots of time to take our dog, Moose, to dog parks and other outdoor places to run and play with him. He loves the outdoors too! Our kids love ice skating and once the snow starts they'll do lots of sledding, snowball fights and building snow forts.

This month we'll also celebrate the winter solstice, which is the shortest day of the year in terms of hours of sunlight and the time when the days start getting longer again. We always celebrate the return of the sun since it seems like it's so cold and dark this time of year. The winter solstice marks the official start of winter which is a great time for resting, enjoying the beauty of winter outside, and learning new things for the year ahead.

I hope you have a wonderful, wild month!

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 December

10 Ways to Learn and Play in Nature this Month

Gather pine boughs, branches, seed pods or pine cones to make seasonal decorations for your home

Color each day of the calendar this month with three paint or crayon colors from that night's sunset or daytime sky

Stay up late the night of the Geminid meteor shower (Dec 13 is the peak) -- best viewing is away from city lights & after midnight!

Ask friends or family to give you cuttings from houseplants and see if you can root them in water (if so, pot your new plants up in potting soil!

Design an experiment to see what nuts, fruits or seeds birds, squirrels or other wildlife in your area like best

Try to do something different outside every day this month

Print out the foraging cards in this issue and play or learn with them

Gather natural materials to make gifts (we have ideas in this issue)

Make a popcorn garland for the birds (use yarn to make it safer for the birds & a thimble to protect your fingers!)

Head outside & pretend you have to forage your own dinner -- see how many plants you can find that you know are safe to eat

10 Wild Gifts to Make and Gather



Gather a sturdy stick and sand, paint and/or carve it to make a walking stick for your favorite grown up. If you like, drill a hole in the top and attach a wrist strap to hold onto.



Make wind chimes out of gathered shells or driftwood (a grown up can help you drill holes or you can wrap them). Hang from a stick or driftwood.



Make homemade elderberry syrup or other recipes or remedies from things you've foraged this year.



Paint a pretty design on a smooth rock to make a paperweight or pretty decoration.



Use sticks, smooth rocks or other found materials & a permanent marker to make garden markers for your favorite gardener's favorite flowers or veggies.



Glue driftwood, sticks, shells, pine cones or other natural materials to a recycled mirror or picture frame.



Use dried wild herbs to make homemade seasoning blends like ramp salt.



Wrap a pretty stone or shell with jeweler's wire or colorful yarn & make a necklace (or make it easy and use a cool rock with a hole already in it!)



Write letters, words or pictures on smooth rocks or shells & put them in a cloth pouch to use for spelling, poetry or story telling.



Use a piece of driftwood or a branch and twine to make a wall hanging for favorite photos. Attach clothespins to the ends if you want to be able to switch them out.

Foraging Cards!

You can use these cards lots of ways. Here are a few fun ways to use them...

Flash cards:

Print out the cards on card stock, printing on both sides of the paper if your printer allows it (otherwise just print one side, put them back in the printer, and print the backs on them) and cut them out. You can laminate them if you want so they'll last longer. Place them all picture side up or have someone hold them up for you to see, and see if you can name each plant.

Matching cards:

Print out two sets of the picture cards on cardstock, leaving the backs blank (you don't need to print out the name pages). Cut them out and laminate them if you like to make them last longer. Spread them out on a table with the blank side facing you. Take turns turning over two cards and try to find matches. If you like, write the name of each plant on the photo so you learn the names as you play.

Foraging ID cards:

Print out the cards as you would for flash cards. Use a hole punch to punch a hole in the top left corner and put them on a key ring so you can take them with you outside and flip through them. If you like, make notes on the name side if you find that plant, noting things like where and when you found it.

We'll have more cards in next month's issue!



Wood Sorrel

Purple Clover

Blueberries

White Clover

Choke
Cherries

Chickweed

Wild Grapes

Lambs-
quarters

Juniper
Berries



Black
Raspberries

Miner's Lettuce

Blackberries

Milkweed

Sumac

Giant Puffball

Purslane

Burdock

Prickly Pear



Chestnuts

Raspberries

Violets

Stinging
Nettles

Acorns

White
Mulberries

Dandelions

Maple
Sap/Syrup

Apples

Botanical Flower Gift Tags

Color these gift tags with watercolor paint or colored pencils to personalize your gifts



TO:
FROM:



TO:
FROM:



TO:
FROM:



TO:
FROM:



TO:
FROM:



TO:
FROM:

Botanical Flower Gift Tags



TO:
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Poems for December

THE SHORTEST DAY By Susan Cooper

So the shortest day came, and the year died,
And everywhere down the centuries of the snow-white world
Came people singing, dancing,
To drive the dark away.
They lighted candles in the winter trees;
They hung their homes with evergreen,
They burned beseeching fires all night long
To keep the year alive.
And when the new year's sunshine blazed awake
They shouted, revelling,
Through all the frosty ages you can hear them
Echoing, behind us - listen!
All the long echoes sing the same delight
This shortest day
As promise awakens in the sleeping land.
They carol, feast, give thanks,
And dearly love their friends, and hope for peace.
And so do we, here, now,
This year, and every year.
Welcome Yule!



I Heard a Bird Sing by Oliver Herford

I heard a bird sing
In the dark of December.
A magical thing
And sweet to remember.
"We are nearer to Spring
Than we were in September,"
I heard a bird sing
In the dark of December.

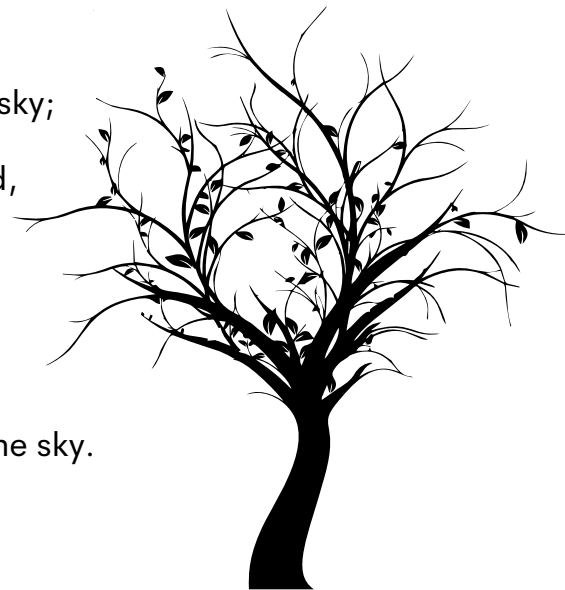
Winter Branches by Margaret Widdemer

When winter-time grows weary, I lift my eyes on high
And see the black trees standing, stripped clear against the sky;

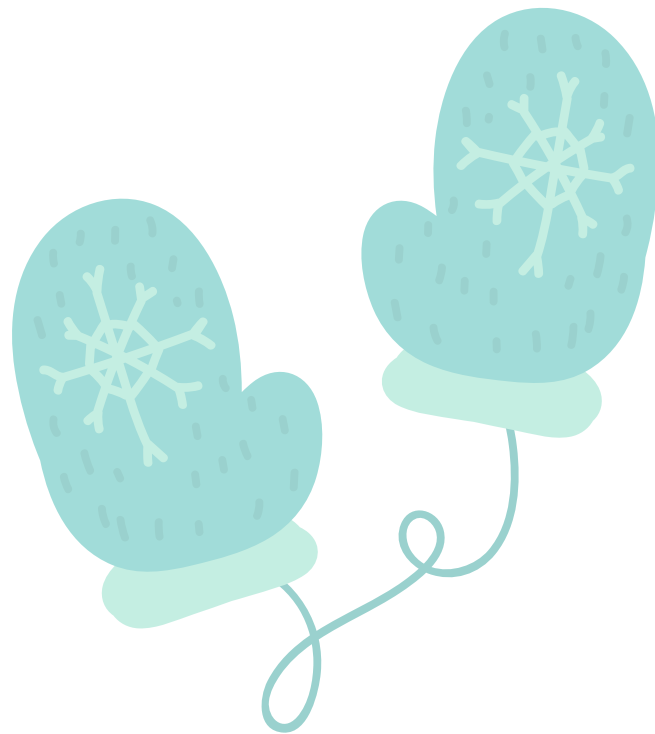
They stand there very silent, with the cold flushed sky behind,
The little twigs flare beautiful and restful and kind;

Clear-cut and certain they rise, with summer past,
For all that trees can ever learn they know now, at last;

Slim and black and wonderful, with all unrest gone by,
The stripped tree-boughs comfort me, drawn clear against the sky.



December



December Weather Tree



Rainy



Cloudy



Sunny



Snowy



December Bird List

Birds spotted this month

December Animal List

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month

December 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 _____

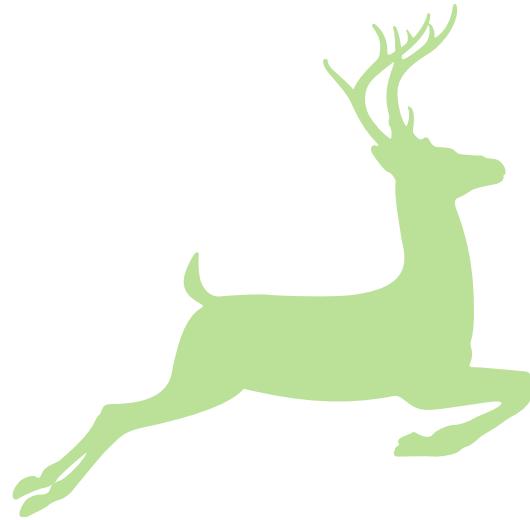
LOOKALIKES & HOW TO POSITIVELY ID:

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.