

January 2022

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

50 Things to do
with a Stick!

Don't Touch That Wild Plant!
Plants to Avoid

More Foraging Flash Cards!

Sassafras & Sorrel

Seasonal poems, activities,
nature journal pages and more!

From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Happy 2022! What are you hoping to do in the wild this year? I'm hoping to do some sledding with my kids this winter and to learn some new wild foods to forage. I hope we can explore some new parks and travel nearby to some fun places to hike. I'm also hoping to plant some fruit trees in the yard of our son Jack's house so we can have lots of fresh fruits like apples. Our kids like eating apples fresh and we also make lots of homemade applesauce that we can every year. We gather apples from lots of trees. One apple tree can produce 500 pounds of apples! Some types of apples will stay fresh in a cool basement for more than 6 months, too!

We are fostering a dog this winter named Buster, so I'll probably be taking lots of walks with Buster and our dog, Moose. Our son Alex loves winter and he usually asks me to take lots of walks in the winter time. It sometimes takes us a while to get very far because he likes to do things like throw himself into snow banks and gather icicles to use as swords (and eat like popsicles if they're clean!). Winter is also a good time to make garden plans, look at seed catalogs and read books to learn new things for next year.

This month starts our fourth year of Wild Kids! As I type this, I have a whole lot of scented geraniums next to me on my windowsill and I'm looking down out at our very snowy yard. It is -8 Fahrenheit today in our part of Minnesota, and around -35 with wind chill! Even the dogs didn't want to go outside and play. We're putting out extra bird seed for the birds and giving them fresh water. We might wait for it to warm up to 0 before we take a walk today! Luckily the weather always changes before too long and we have a warm house to come home to.

Wherever you are, I hope you have a wonderful month and a wonderful year, full of wild adventures!

~Alicia



Alex with an icicle sword

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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www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids.

Go Wild in January

10 WAYS TO LEARN AND PLAY WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

Color in the ones you do!

Make a snow or sand sculpture

Catch snowflakes on a piece of black paper & take pictures of them

Try to ID tracks in the snow, sand or mud

Make a 2022 nature bucket list

Write a song about winter

Gather seeds from veggies like winter squash & peppers. Fold them in damp paper towels in sandwich baggies and tape to a sunny window to sprout.

Get some foraging books out of the library and make lists of plants you'd like to find this year

Make a mug of hot cocoa or tea and sit outside to watch the sunrise or sunset

Find natural items outside to decorate windowsills

Gather sticks & find lots of ways to play with them (we have 50 in this issue!)

50 THINGS TO DO WITH A STICK!

1. Tie ribbons to it to make a fairy wand.
2. Tie or glue several together to make a frame for art or photos.
3. Stick one in a pot to stake a droopy plant.
4. Char it in a campfire and then draw with it.
5. Make a nature sundial (we tell you how in the Feb 2020 issue).
6. Hang sea shells from it to make a wind chime.
7. Make doll furniture.
8. Throw it like a spear and see how many throws it takes to cross the yard or park.
9. Paint a big one to make a walking stick.
10. Make a wild paintbrush -- use a rubber band to attach a feather, grasses or other natural elements.
11. Use sticks to mark your way back on a hike.
12. Arrange some hollow ones (like dried dock) for a bug hotel.
13. Paint some with cheerful colors and put them in a vase.
14. Make a doll raft with several small ones. See if it will float!
15. Use it to practice whittling (have a grown up show you how).
16. Play fetch with your dog or a friend's dog.
17. Tie several into star shapes with yarn to make decorations.
18. Use small sticks to practice building a campfire with your favorite grown up.
19. Gather sticks from several trees and see how many you can identify from their bark.
20. Make a magic wand.
21. Use it like a conductor.
22. Use it to roast a marshmallow or hot dog over a fire.
23. Write numbers on the sticks and spread them around the yard and have someone call out numbers. Race to find the numbers.
24. Use sticks for math manipulatives to solve math problems.
25. Use it as a sword. For a fancier sword, use string to wrap a shorter stick to the top in a t shape.



26. Find a hollow one (like dried dock) to use as a bubble blower.
27. Gather a bunch of larger ones and make a shelter (we tell you how in the March 2019 issue).
28. Make a nature loom by stringing colorful yarn on a Y shaped stick and tucking in natural elements like feathers.
29. Play tic-tac-toe (use sticks to make the grids and rocks or shells for the playing pieces).
30. Use it to write or draw in the sand.
31. Play pick-up sticks. Drop a bunch of thin sticks in a pile and remove one at a time without moving the others.
32. Gather lots of small, thin sticks and write numbers on one end. Make a list of what each number means (things to do, fortunes, chores, etc.) and pick a stick to see what the number says.
33. Decorate a sand castle.
34. Make a stick man.
35. Make a horseshoe target (if you don't have a horseshoe you can toss a grapevine wreath or V shaped stick).
36. Use it to dig up some worms.
37. Make a garden marker -- paint it and use a permanent marker to write the name of seeds or plants you've planted.
38. Use it as a marker to see how far you can jump.
39. Hang a hula hoop in a tree and practice "spear throwing" long sticks through it.
40. Draw smiles, mustaches, monocles and other funny props and tape them to sticks for fun photo props.
41. Use a long stick to play limbo.
42. Use two sticks like chopsticks and practice picking things up.
43. Make a fairy house.
44. Use two as drumsticks.
45. Make "pooh sticks"(from Winnie the Pooh) -- drop a stick on one side of a bridge with a friend and go to the other side to see whose stick comes through first.
46. Rub two together and see if you can make smoke.
47. Make nature art.
48. Attach a piece of string to make a play fishing pole.
49. See how many sticks you can juggle.
50. _____ (Make up your own!)



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.

Look for the first set of foraging cards in last month's issue!



Plantain

Pears

Morel
Mushrooms

Spruce Tips

Elderberries

Elderflowers

Crab apples

Gooseberries

Wild Asparagus



Pheasant Back
Mushrooms

Aronia

Ramps

Wild Plums

Chicken
of the Woods
Mushrooms

Garlic Mustard

Walnuts

Wild Roses
and
Rose Hips

Cattails

DON'T TOUCH THAT PLANT!

There are thousands of kinds of helpful plants but there are some that are dangerous. Some are poisonous and some can give you a rash if you touch them. Some like stinging nettles are healthy and tasty once you cook them, but can give you a painful sting if you touch them raw. Wild parsnip can give you a painful rash if you touch it during sunlight. Some like foxglove grow in lots of gardens but are very poisonous. Can you match the dangerous plants to their names?

- A Poison Oak
- B Mistletoe
- C Monkshood
- D Oleander

- E Giant Hogweed
- F Poison Hemlock
- G Wild Parsnip
- H Death Camas

- I Poison Ivy
- J Foxglove
- K Stinging Nettles
- L White Hellebore



(Answers on the back page.)

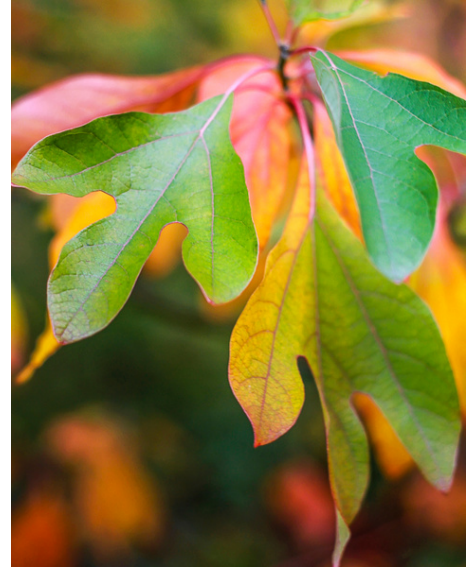
SASSAFRASS

SASSAFRAS ALBIDUM



Sassafras is a tree that has been used by many people for thousands of years.

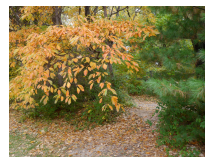
Root beer was originally flavored by the roots of sassafras trees that were harvested in late winter. The root beer flavor comes from sassafras's natural chemical called safrole. Root beer hasn't used real safrole since 1960, when scientists found out that if they gave rats a whole lot of safrole it could make them sick. The United States banned it back then and root beer has been flavored with artificial root beer flavor ever since. In 1994 they took the ban back. Scientists still say that people shouldn't drink too much sassafras tea or use too much safrole because it could harm them. Safrole is also found in other foods like black pepper, nutmeg and basil.



For many years, people have dried young sassafras leaves and pounded them into a fine powder called filé that is used in gumbo and other Cajun recipes. Filé powder is added to the food at the end of cooking to thicken it and give it a good flavor.



Some people make tea, syrup and jelly from the roots, and some people ferment drinks made with sassafras roots to make types of beer. Other people make tea from the bark, and people use the wood as lumber to build things like furniture and boats. Sassafras oil is used in lots of perfumes and aromatherapy because it smells so good.



Did you know...

When safrole was banned in the United States in 1960, people in Louisiana were very upset because filé powder is such an important spice there. The government finally agreed that since sassafras leaves have very little safrole, they could still make filé.

SASSAFRASS



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

SORREL

RUMEX ACETOSA



Sorrel was once known as a 'the poor man's herb' because it was easy for people to forage for free. Varieties of sorrel grow all around the world and people also grow it in their gardens. It can be used fresh or cooked, and is often used in salads. It has a fresh taste and is a little sour. Some people say they taste like apple peels! Some people also dry the leaves and grind them into a powder they use as flour and to make noodles.

There are lots of kinds of sorrel. Some of the most common ones are Common or Garden Sorrel (*Rumex Acetosa*) and Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex Acetosella*). There are also lots of kinds of sorrel that have been developed for gardens like French Sorrel and Red Veined Sorrel. They are in the buckwheat family (which is not related to wheat).

Remember that most greens get bitter later in the year when the days have been hotter, and the larger (older) leaves are usually more bitter. That's one reason people like spring greens so much. Leaves are tender and mild that time of year.

Another plant called sorrel is Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), which is not actually related to the other types of sorrel. We learned about sorrel in the March 2019 issue -- it's the cute little heart shaped leaves that many people think are clover. Wood sorrel is tart like other sorrels.



Sorrel is high in oxalic acid, which means people with some medical conditions like arthritis, gout or kidney stones shouldn't eat too much of it. Oxalic acid is what makes sorrel taste tart like lemons. Other plants that have a lot of oxalic acid are rhubarb, asparagus, green tea and spinach.

Did you know...

The name sorrel comes from the French "surelle" meaning sour.

Roman soldiers & farm workers used to suck on sorrel leaves when they were thirsty. They named the sorrel family after this practice. The Latin name for the sorrel family is *Rumex*, which means "I suck"!



SORREL

(RUMEX ACETOSA)

Plate 230.



Sorrel.

Eliz. Blackwell delin. sculp. et Pinx.

1. Flower.
2. Flower separate.
3. Seed.

Acetosa.

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 month for dreaming."
- Jean Hersey*

It sifts from Leaden Sieves
By Emily Dickinson

It sifts from Leaden Sieves -
It powders all the Wood.
It fills with Alabaster Wool
The Wrinkles of the Road -

It makes an even Face
Of Mountain, and of Plain -
Unbroken Forehead from the East
Unto the East again -

It reaches to the Fence -
It wraps it Rail by Rail
Till it is lost in Fleeces -
It deals Celestial Vail

To Stump, and Stack - and Stem -
A Summer's empty Room -
Acres of Joints, where Harvests were,
Recordless, but for them -

It Ruffles Wrists of Posts
As Ankles of a Queen -
Then stills it's Artisans - like Ghosts -
Denying they have been -

Desert Places
By Robert Lee Frost

*Snow falling and night falling fast, oh, fast
In a field I looked into going past,
And the ground almost covered smooth in snow,
But a few weeds and stubble showing last.*

*The woods around it have it, it is theirs.
All animals are smothered in their lairs.
I am too absent-spirited to count;
The loneliness includes me unawares.*

*And lonely as it is, that loneliness
Will be more lonely ere it will be less
A blanker whiteness of benighted snow
With no expression, nothing to express.*

*They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars, on stars where no human race is.
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places.*

'Tis the first snow
by Matsuo Basho



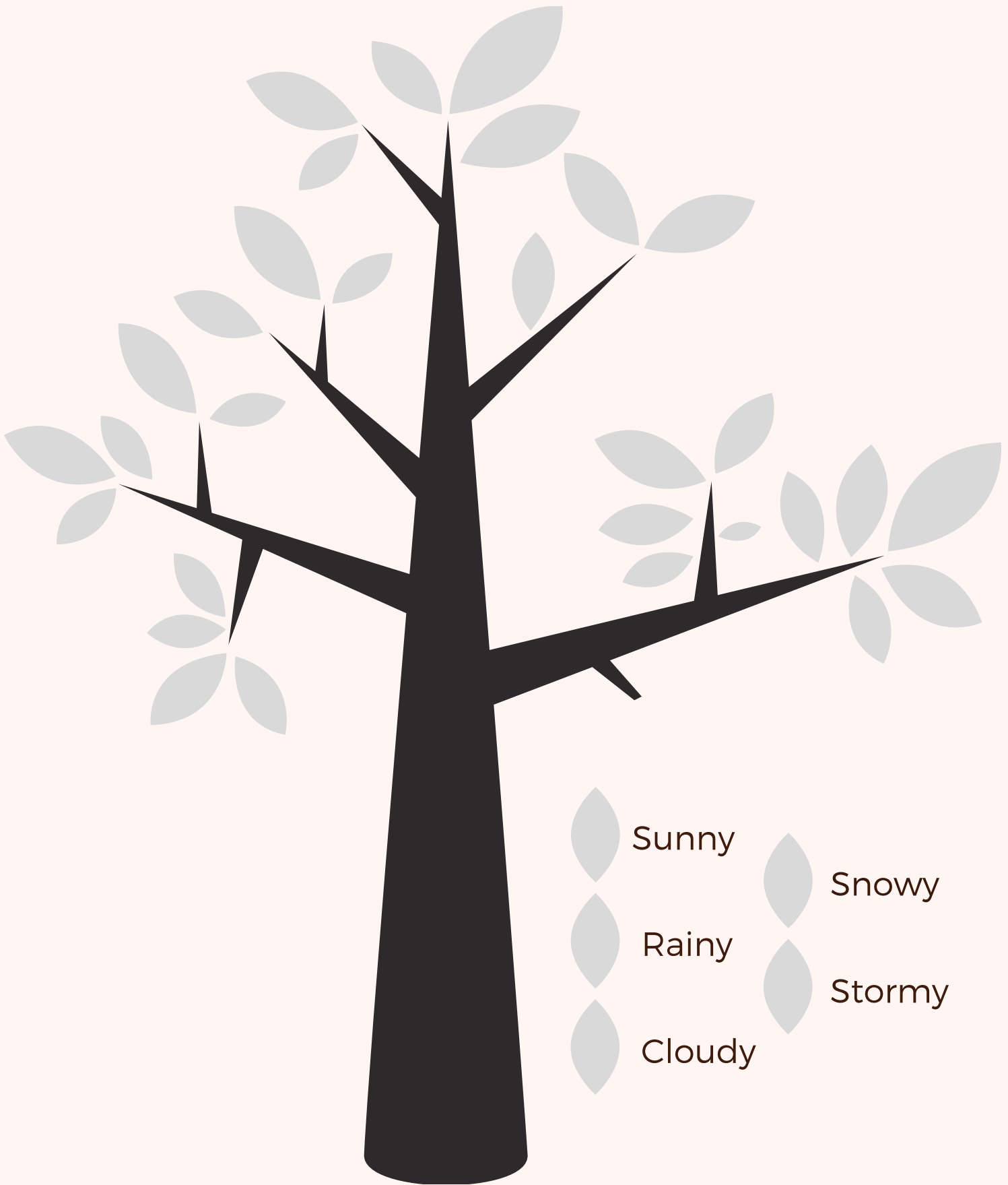
'Tis the first snow—
Just enough to bend
The gladiolus leaves!



January Nature Journal



January Weather Tree



January Bird List

Birds spotted this month

January Animal List

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month

January Nature Notes

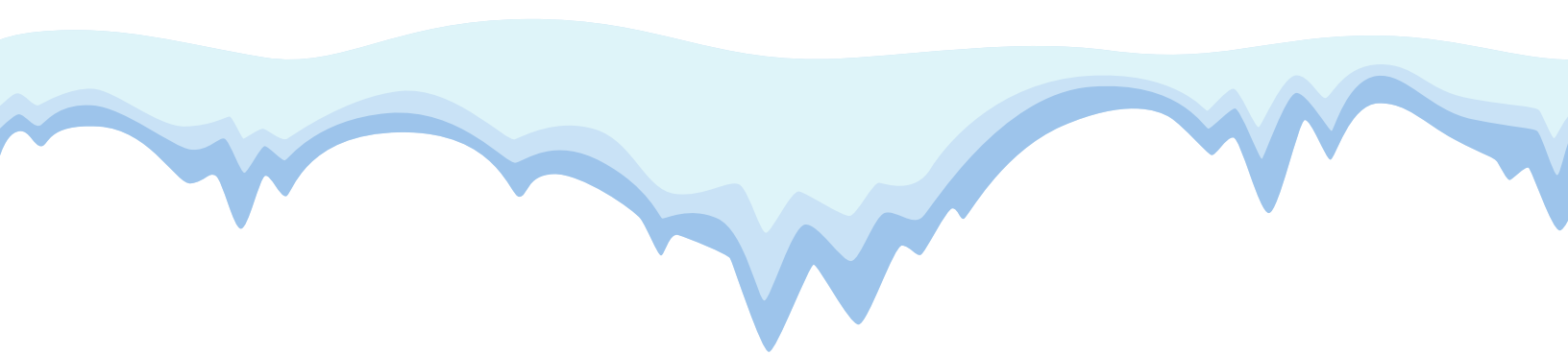
Record any interesting discoveries here -- plants you identify, foods you forage, outdoor activities, cool nature projects, nature books read, or just notes about what it's like outside this week!

Week 1 Sketches & Observations



Week 2 Sketches & Observations

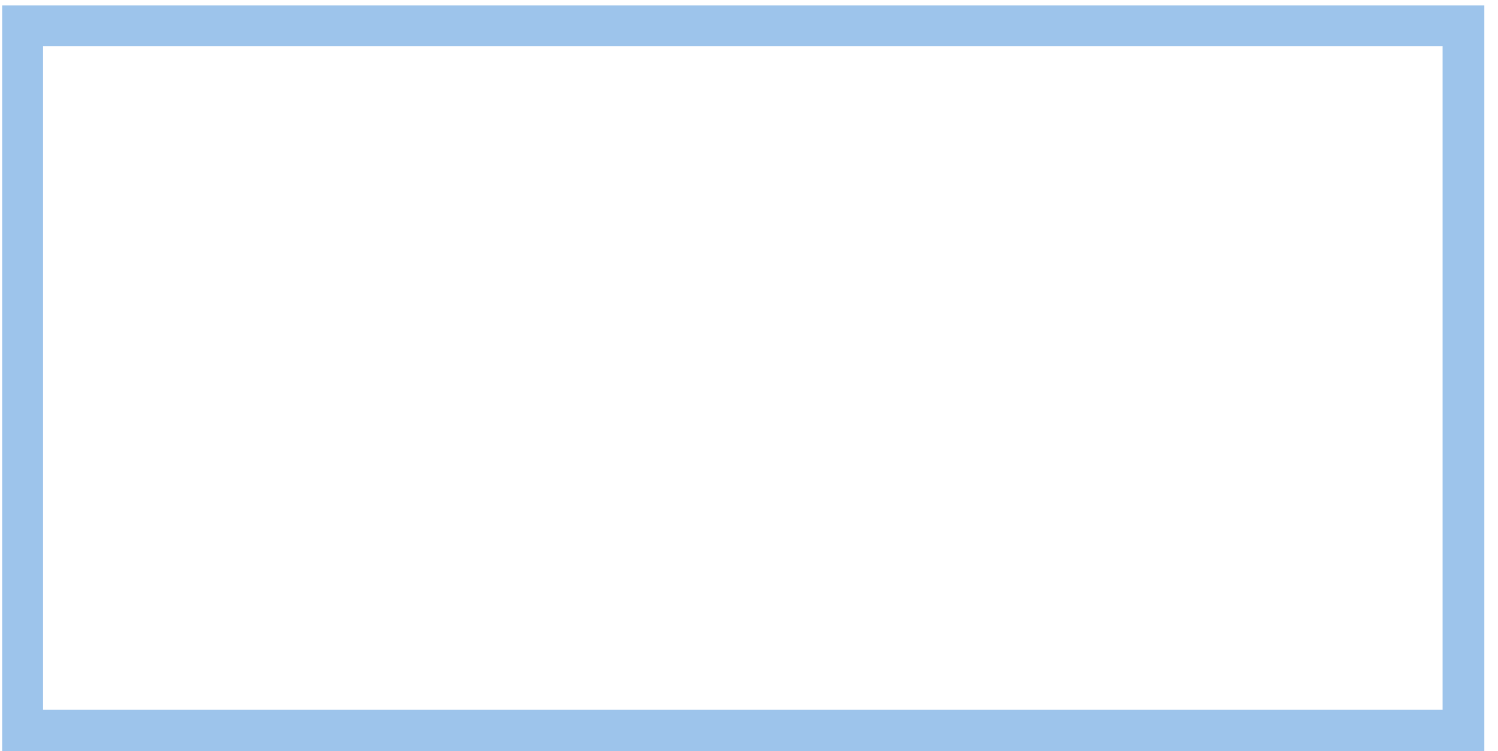




Week 3 Sketches & Observations



Week 4 Sketches & Observations





Answers to Don't Touch That Wild Plant:

IEFD
KBAG
JCHL

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