

March 2023

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

A young girl with dark hair is sitting in a tree, looking through binoculars. She is wearing a green t-shirt and red shorts. The background is a lush green forest with sunlight filtering through the leaves.

Mushroom Spore
Prints for Wild
Mushrooms

March Nature
Photo Challenge

City Foraging
BINGO

Nature Art Pages

Enoki & Oyster
Mushrooms

Plus seasonal
poetry, activities,
nature journal
pages & more!

From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Welcome March!

It's funny -- it always feels to me like January lasts two years and February lasts a couple of minutes! Does it feel that way to you?

Are you excited about March? For those of us in the Northern Hemisphere like the United States and the UK, we'll be welcoming spring this month. Those people in the Southern Hemisphere like Australia and South Africa will be welcoming fall. Either way, it's a month of exciting change and weather that will probably change a lot too.

What are you looking forward to doing this month? We always help tap maple trees in March, which is a fun and tasty tradition. We also get in the last of our ice skating and sledding while we still have lots of snow and cold here in Minnesota.

We're starting seeds for our garden this month too. We need to wait longer for a lot of plants since we probably can't plant them outside until May, but some seeds need a long time indoors to get started so we'll sow some of those.

Our days are getting longer here in the Northern Hemisphere too, and that always feels nice. We try to live by the seasons and rest more in the winter when nature rests, but by March we are ready to burst back out like those flowers that have been dormant under the snow. How about you? What are you bursting to do in nature this month?

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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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 March

10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

Make a dart board in the dirt, snow or sand and use rocks or sticks as darts

Look for a cool or pretty rock or other nature item to make into a necklace

Cut budding branches of flowering shrubs and bring them inside to flower in a vase

Write words on small rocks and use them to write poems

Go on a flashlight walk at night and see what wildlife you can spot

Go to a park or nature center you've never been to

Take part in our March nature photo challenge

Sit quietly outside for 10 minutes and count how many different kinds of birds & animals you see

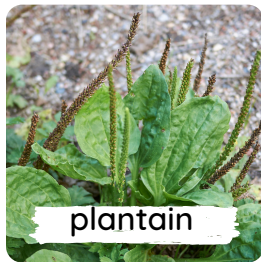
Start a leaf rubbing collection & label each kind of leaf

Use fallen or trimmed branches to make something crafty

City Foraging Bingo

You don't need to go deep into secluded places in nature to find edible and medicinal wild plants. Even in the city, you can find so many. See how many of these wild plants you can spot this month. You may be able to find them in parks, empty lots, or even in your own lawn. Make an x over the ones you spot and try to get a BINGO either across, down, or diagonally.

Not all of these may be in your area and some of them may be hard to find. We have a blank page if you want to make your own board.



Remember that it's often one part of a plant that's edible or medicinal, like just the fruits or leaves. Also remember that you should only forage where it is legal and safe. Some city areas may have polluted soil from factories, pesticides or car exhaust. There are many places where lots of wonderful wild plants are free and healthy though!

My Foraging Bingo

How to Play: Write down wild edible and medicinal plants that are in your area this time of year, one in each square. If you need suggestions, do a web search for foraging and your location and the month or season. Make an x over the ones you spot and try to get a BINGO either across, down, or diagonally. To make it a bigger challenge, try to get a blackout by marking off every square.

		FREE		

Making Mushroom Spore Prints



Mushroom collectors use spore prints as ways to identify mushrooms. Sometimes mushrooms look very similar to other mushrooms that are poisonous, but their spore prints can look completely different with different colors.

Making spore prints is easy and so much fun.

Simply take a relatively fresh mushroom, remove the stem, and put it gills-down on a piece of paper. Make sure your mushroom is mature enough to have started to produce spores (not super tiny and new). If it's sort of dried out you can sprinkle a little bit of water on it. **If there is any chance your mushroom is poisonous, wear disposable gloves.**

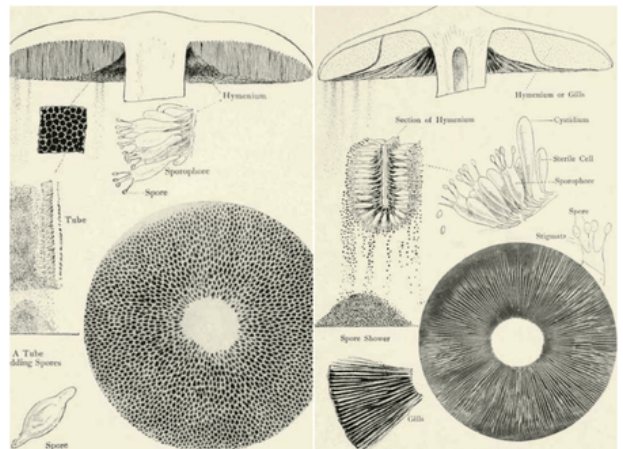
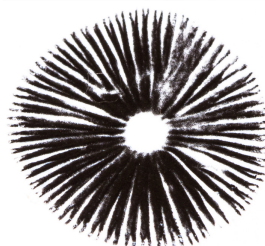
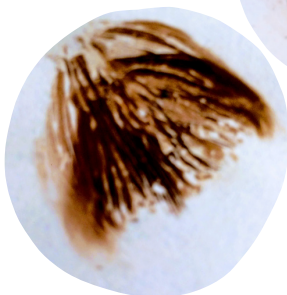
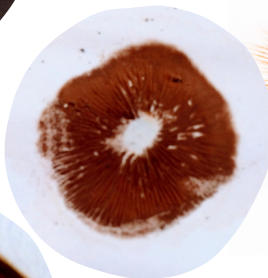
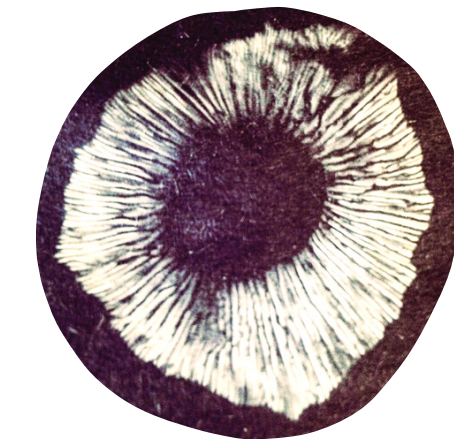
Since some spore prints are white, you might want to do one on white paper and one on black. You can also place it so it's half on white paper, half on dark.

Cover your mushroom with a bowl to keep it undisturbed and leave it for a few hours or overnight, then carefully lift the mushroom to see your print.

Spore prints can be brown, white, pink or black, just to name a few of their colors. Ink caps release so many black spores that people mix them with water to make ink!

If you want to preserve your spore print, spray it gently from a distance with artist's fixative or hair spray.

Why not start a spore print collection and see how many mushrooms you can gather and ID?



From: "Our Edible Toadstools and Mushrooms and How to Distinguish Them", by W. Hamilton Gibson

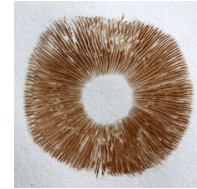
Here's an example of how spore prints can help us identify mushrooms.

Wood blewit (*Clitocybe nuda*) is an edible mushroom that has some mushrooms that look very similar but have different colors of spore prints. Blewits have a white to light pink spore print and the lookalike *Cortinarius* has a rusty brown spore print..

Wood blewit (edible)



Cortinarius (poisonous)



Taking spore prints is one way of many to make sure that you correctly identify mushrooms, but it should never be the only way.

Here are some mushrooms and their spore colors:

- **Shaggy Mane (*Coprinus comatus*) - black**
- **Enokitake (*Flammulina velutipes*) - white**
- **Reishi (*Ganoderma lucidum*) - brown**
- **Maitake (*Grifola frondosa*) - white**
- **Oyster Mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) - white or light purple**
- **Turkey Tail (*Trametes versicolor*) - white**
- **Amanita species - white**
- **Black Trumpet (*Craterellus cornucopiodes*) - yellowish**
- **King Bolete (*Boletus edulis*) - dark greenish brown**
- **Chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius*) - white or yellow**
- **Wine cap (*Stropharia rugosoannulata*) - dark purple-brown/black**

Some mushrooms like morels and puffballs are oddly shaped and don't have an easy way to make spore prints. You can use the entire mushroom and do the same process. You'll still see spores, just not the precise pattern that other mushrooms make.

March Nature Art Journal

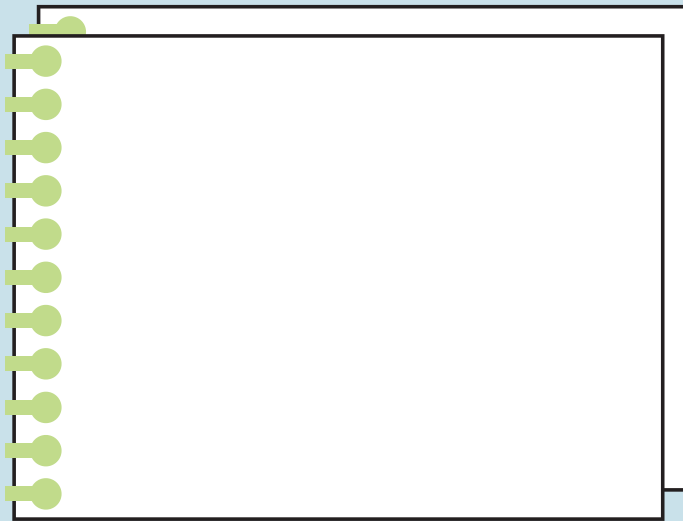


Let's have some art fun with nature!
Take the following pages outside and make
some art with our prompts this month.

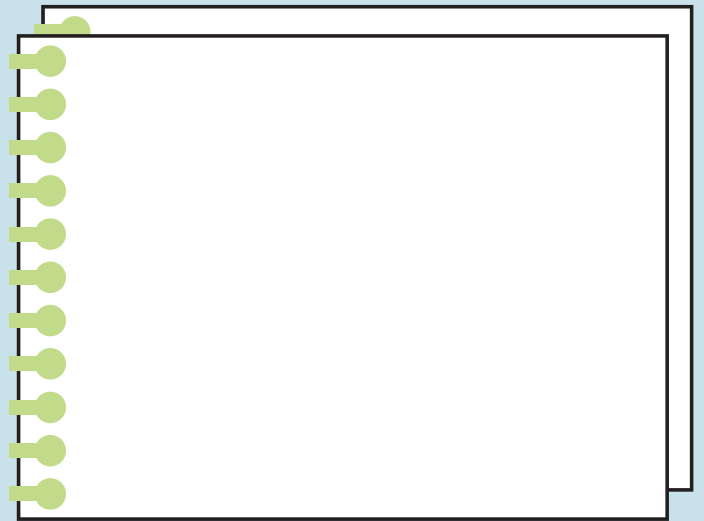
Directions:

There are no rules!
You can do these in any order you like.
You can go in order
or just find one each day that looks fun.
You can change them.
You can make up new prompts.
Use them in any way that you like!

Have fun!



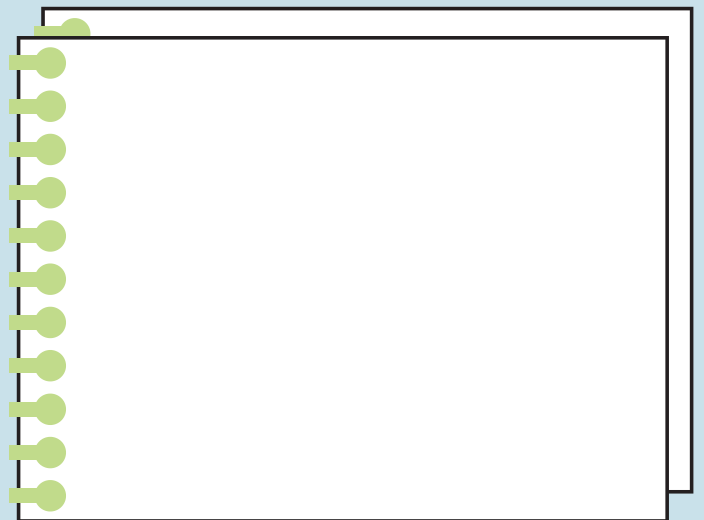
Find a crayon or colored pencil the color of today's sky and draw it



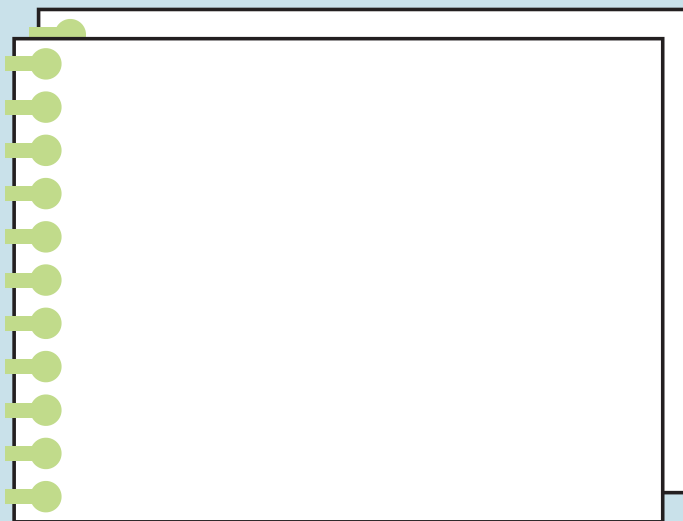
Find some mud and stamp it into this square in a pattern



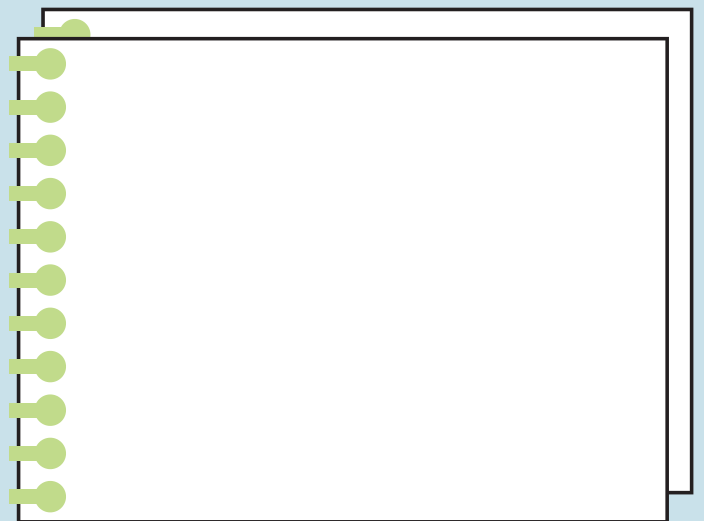
Sketch a tree you see outside



Take a crayon and do a rubbing of a leaf you find



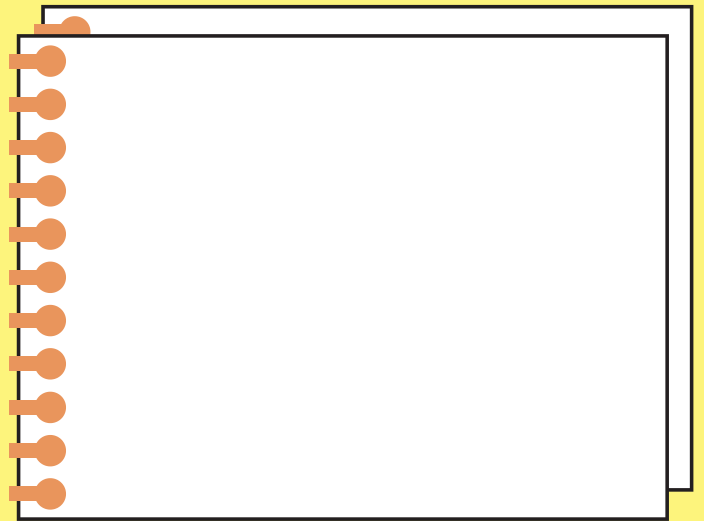
Draw a design in washable markers here and then go outside and find water to dribble on it



Use something natural as a paintbrush to paint a design here



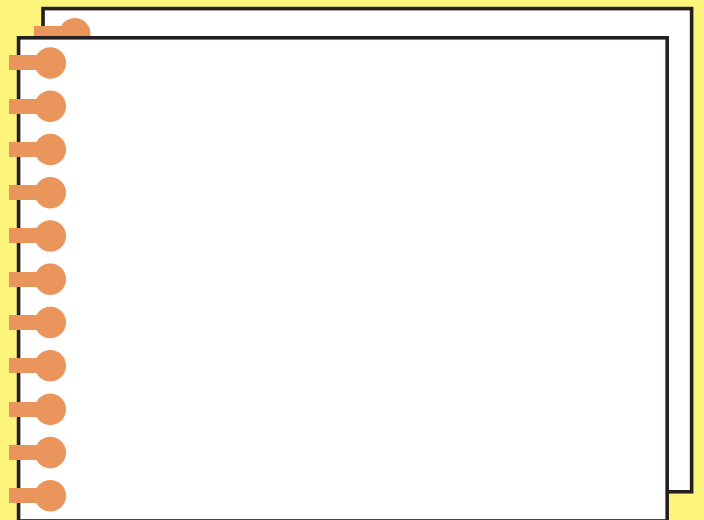
Use three colors to draw something you find outside



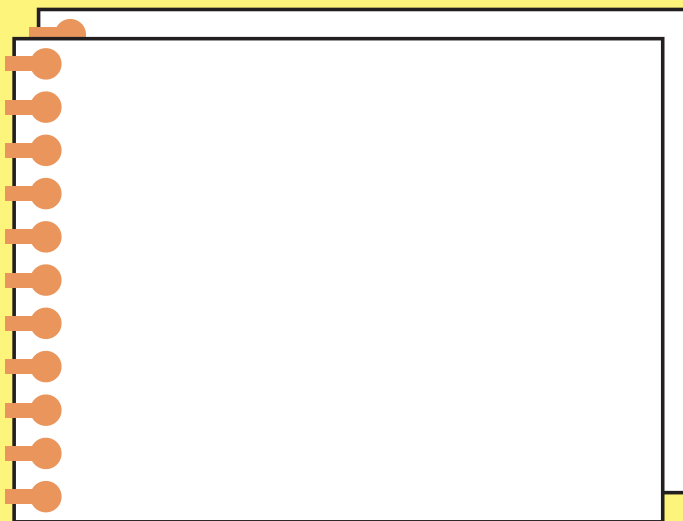
Use a crayon to make a rubbing of bark on a tree



Sketch a bird you see outside



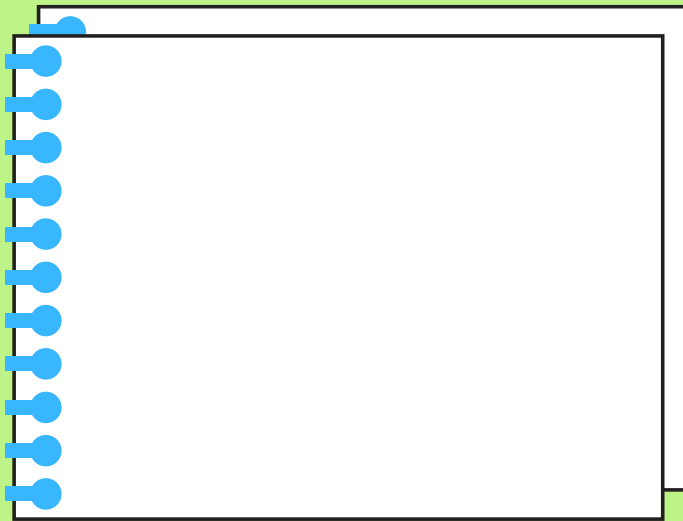
Pound a leaf or petal onto this square



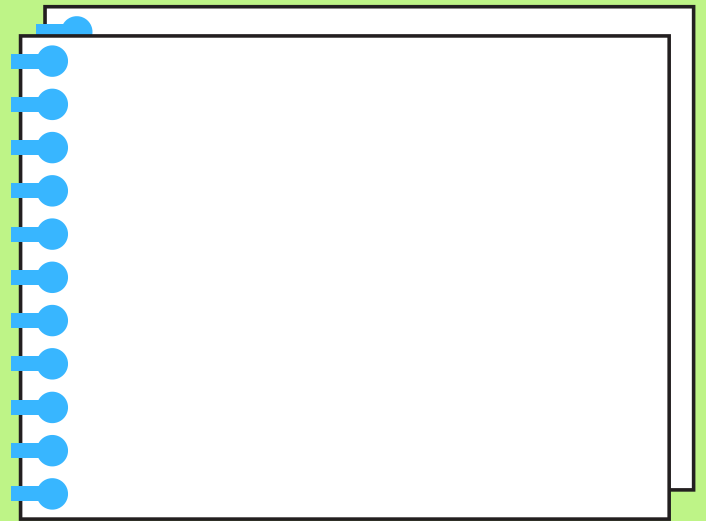
Take a crayon or colored pencil outside and then draw something you find that matches its color



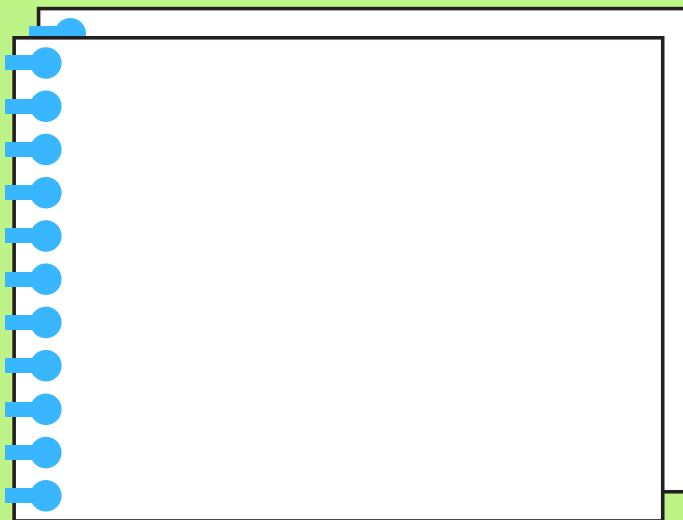
Draw a silhouette of a tree you find outside



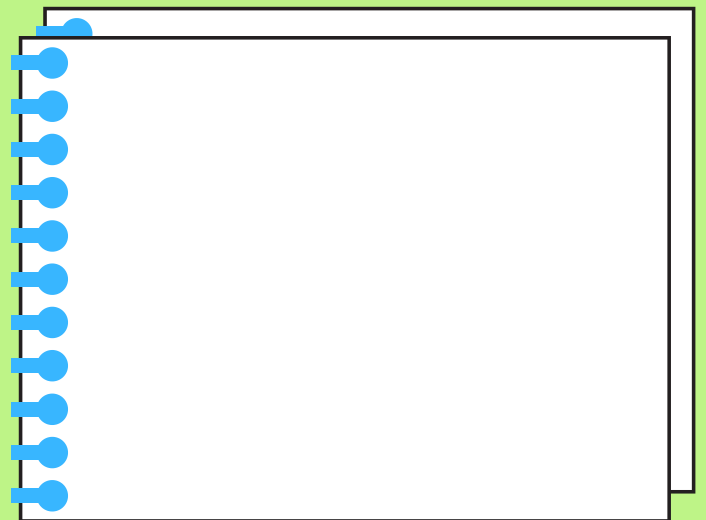
Draw something tiny that you find outside



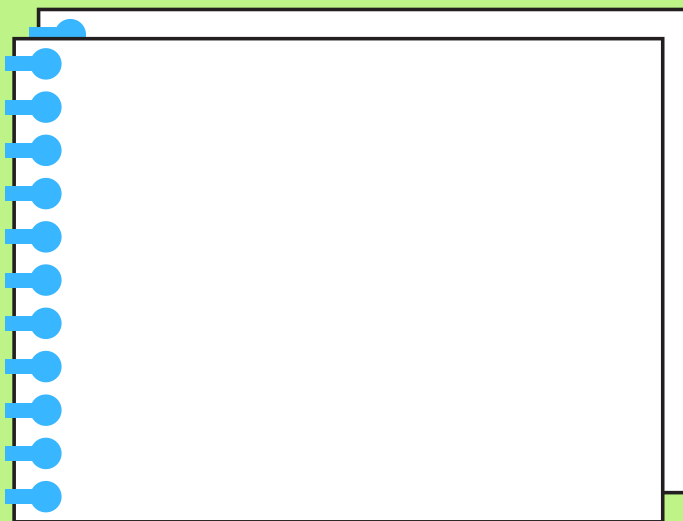
Draw a scene outside using opposite colors than the ones you see



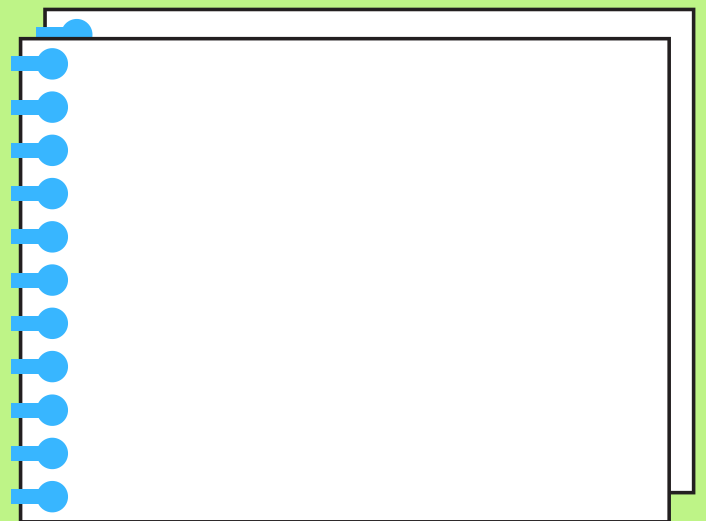
Draw an edible plant you find



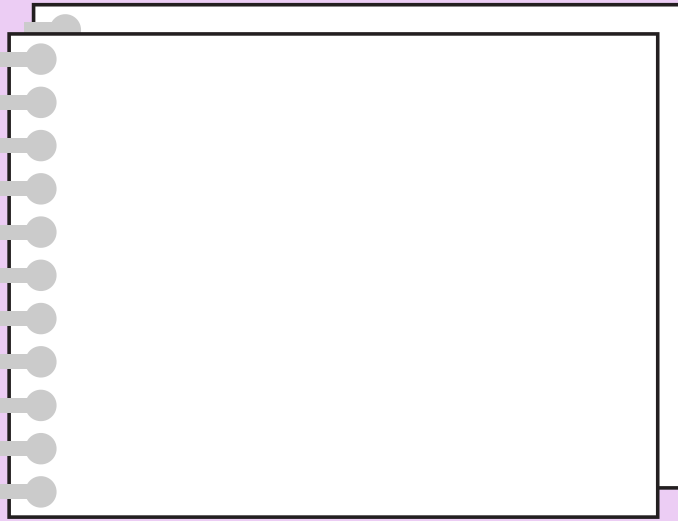
Draw a flower garden you'd like to plant from above



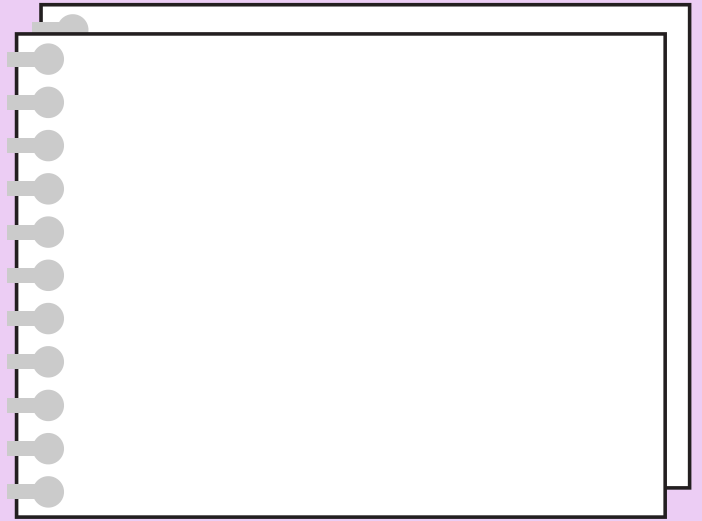
Draw circles here in the colors you see the most of in your yard today



Draw an insect you find



Trace something natural you find outside here



Draw four cool rocks you find



Draw or paint today's sky



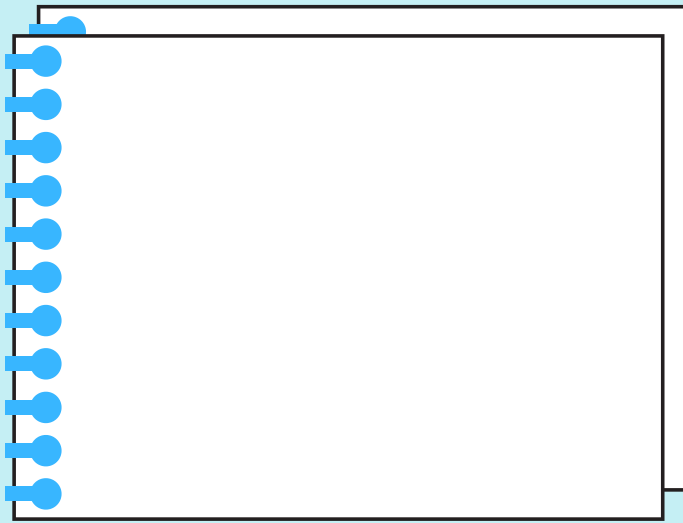
Dip something natural in paint and print it on this square



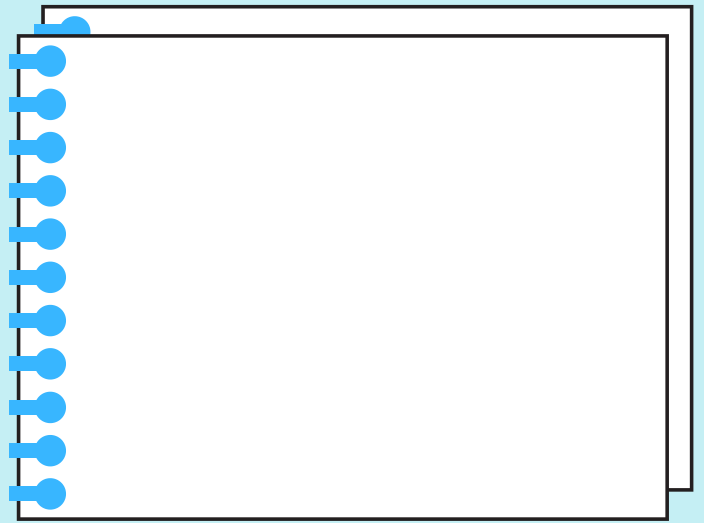
Draw something round & natural that you find outside



Design a sign to protect pollinators



Dribble muddy water here



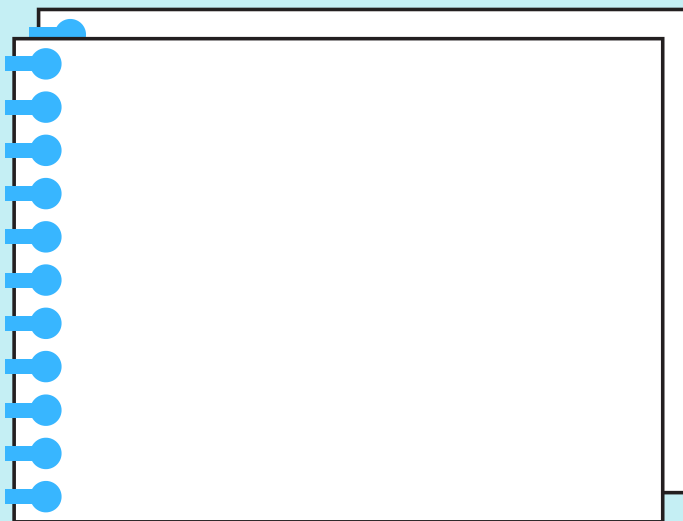
Find a seed to draw close up



Look for a spiderweb to draw



Climb up high outside (safely!) and draw what you see from above



Lie down on the ground outside and draw what you see

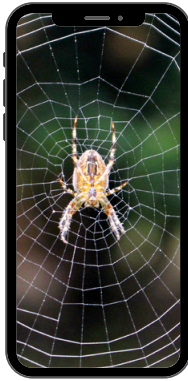


Draw the coolest thing you find in nature today

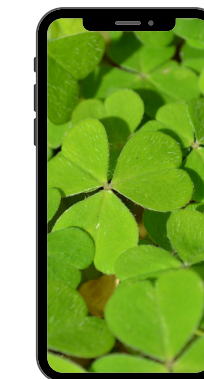
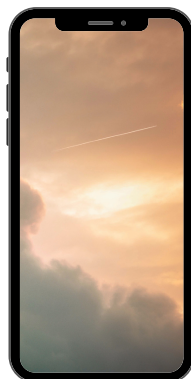
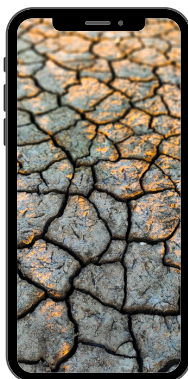
March

Nature Photo Challenge

Try to head outside and take a picture each day with that day's prompt as an inspiration!



- | | | | | | |
|----|--------|----|---------------|----|------------|
| 1 | Path | 11 | Living | 21 | Silhouette |
| 2 | Sky | 12 | Shiny | 22 | Edible |
| 3 | Sharp | 13 | Blue | 23 | Wet |
| 4 | Bird | 14 | Strange | 24 | Giant |
| 5 | Gray | 15 | Bumpy | 25 | Shadow |
| 6 | Cracks | 16 | Pattern | 26 | Many |
| 7 | Sunset | 17 | Green | 27 | Delicate |
| 8 | Tall | 18 | Tiny | 28 | Evening |
| 9 | Sign | 19 | Black & White | | |
| 10 | High | 20 | Symmetrical | | |



March Poetry

The Early Frogs by Harry Edward Mills

O, I love to hear the frogs
When they first begin to sing;
How they vocalize the bogs,
And vociferate the Spring.
How they carrol as they croak,
How they mingle jest and joke
With their solemn chant and dirge
On the river's slimy verge.



Upon the Frog By John Bunyan

The frog by nature is both damp and cold,
Her mouth is large, her belly much will hold;
She sits somewhat ascending, loves to be
Croaking in gardens, though unpleasantly.

The Tree Toad by John Brainerd

I am a jolly tree toad, upon a chestnut tree;
I chirp, because I know that the night was made for me;
The young bat flies above me, the glow-worm shines below,
And the owlet sits to hear me, and half forgets his woe.

The Frog By Hilaire Belloc

Be kind and tender to the Frog,
And do not call him names,
As "Slimy skin," or "Polly-wog,"
Or likewise "ugly James,"
Or "Gap-a-grin," or "Toad-gone-wrong,"
Or "Bill Bandy-knees":
The Frog is justly sensitive
To epithets like these.

No animal will more repay
A treatment kind and fair;
At least so lonely people say
Who keep a frog (and, by the way,
They are extremely rare).

古池や 蛙飛び込む 水の音
By Matsuo Basho

The old pond
A frog jumps in—
The sound of the water



ENOKI

(*Flammulina* sp.)



Enoki are such interesting mushrooms! They are the fifth most cultivated (farmed) mushrooms in the world, but those ones look nothing like the ones you'll find in the wild.

Their scientific name for wild enoki, *Flammulina velutipes*, means "flame-colored," with "veluti" and "pes" mean "foot covered with fine hair."

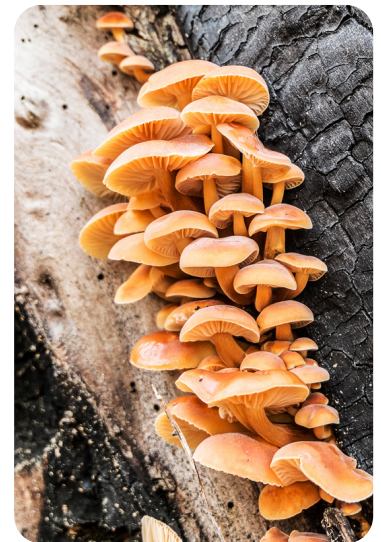
Wild enoki mushrooms grow all over North America, Europe, and Asia. Technically, the European and North American ones are genetically different from the Asian species, but they are so similar that they are usually grouped together. Scientists change things all the time, so in the future they might have different names.

Wild enoki mushrooms have yellowish-reddish-brown caps that often look like a hamburger bun. They have a velvety stem and pale yellow or white gills. They grow on trees that are dying or dead, often in big groups, and they are often found in cold weather.

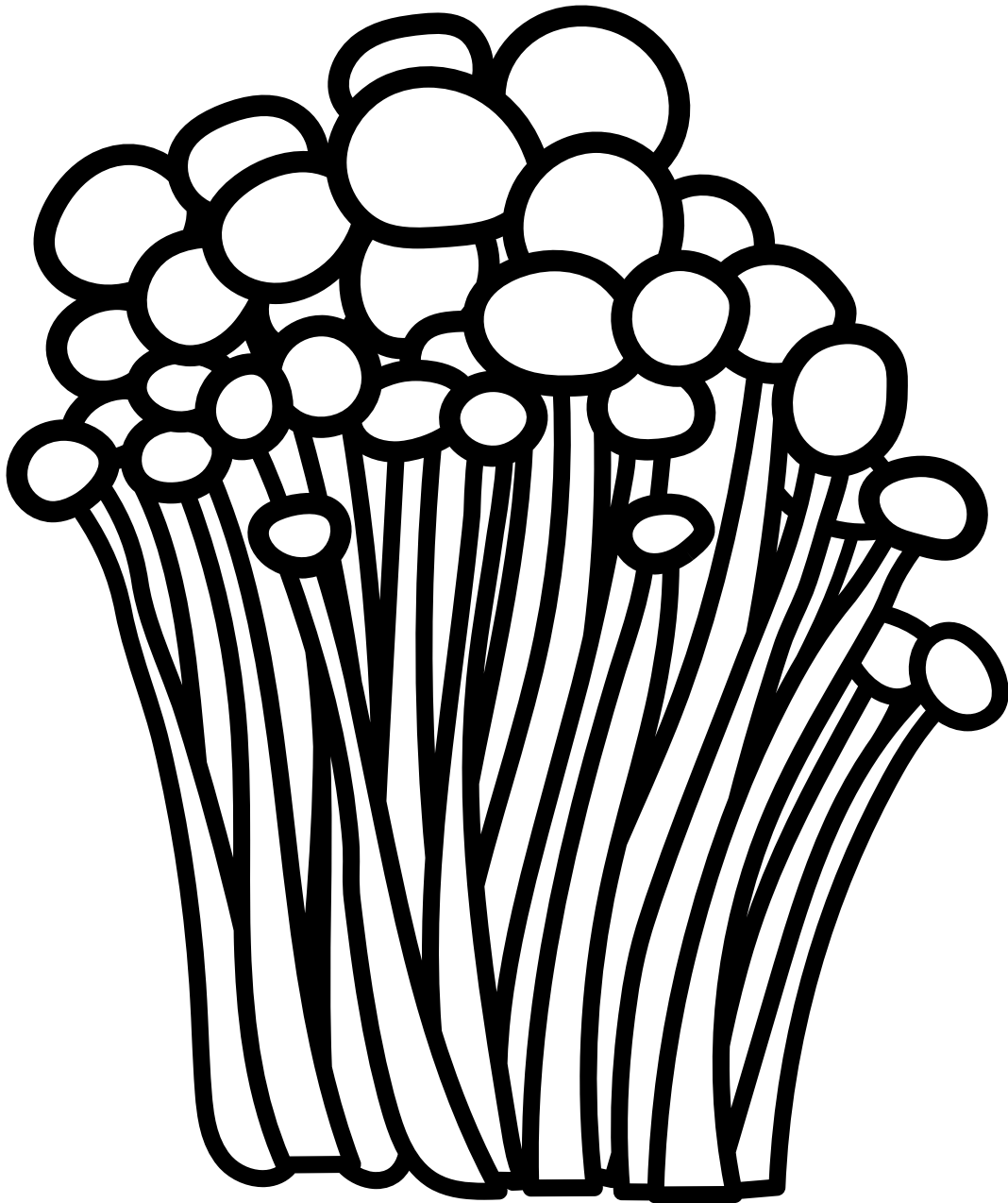
Cultivated enoki mushrooms are grown in total darkness, which makes them pure white. They are grown in tall, skinny containers and they end up very thin and tall, with a tiny little cap at the very top. They grow very quickly, which is another reason people like to grow them.

Enoki mushrooms were also the first mushrooms intentionally grown in space! Scientists found out they grew flat and twisted in zero gravity. They are also really good at destroying bad chemicals in the soil, so scientists are looking into seeing if they can "clean" polluted soil.

Enoki mushrooms aren't good mushrooms to forage for beginners because there are toxic lookalikes. Mushroom hunters use spore prints as one way to identify them (they have white spore prints), but when you are first learning mushrooms they are better sampled from a supermarket. You can also buy kits to grow your own!



Enoki Mushrooms
(cultivated)
(*Flammulina sp.*)



OYSTER MUSHROOMS

(*Pleurotus ostreatus*)



Oyster mushrooms are often on lists of the best mushrooms to forage if you are new to foraging. They are common and easy to identify. Our family forages a lot of oyster mushrooms every year.

Oyster mushrooms are usually white to light brown, with firm caps and white flesh, and they usually grow in clusters on dying trees. They are usually 2-10 inches across. They always grow on wood -- either dying or dead trees.

They have an oyster-looking cap and decurrent gills, which means that the gills run right down the stem. Sometimes there's not much stem. Their spore print is white to light purple-gray. They smell a little bit like licorice. You can often find them in summer and fall, or even winter in mild areas.

Not only are they tasty and easy to find, but they have so many other cool uses! They are excellent at cleaning pollution out of the soil, they can be used for making "oyster leather," they're medicinal, and they even have been used to clean up oil spills.

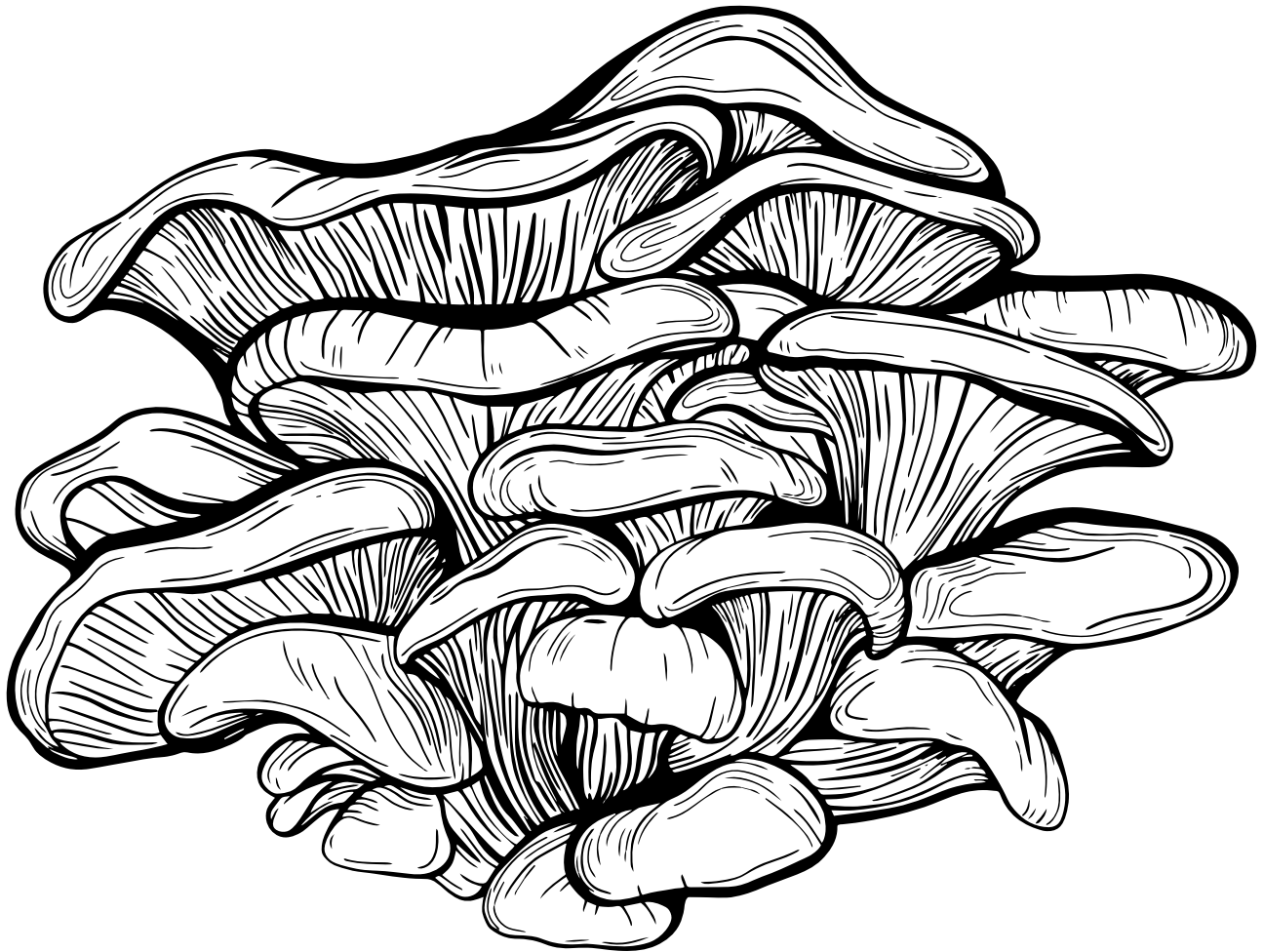
People also cultivate oyster mushrooms to sell in stores, and you can buy kits to grow your own.



There are some lookalikes but they are not that similar and none of them are poisonous. The closest thing to a poisonous lookalike is the rare *Omphalotus nidiformis* in India, Japan and Australia, though it does have differences. The most interesting thing about *Omphalotus nidiformis* is that it is bioluminescent, which means it glows in the dark! If your mushrooms glow in the dark, they're not oyster mushrooms. Wouldn't those be fun to photograph though?

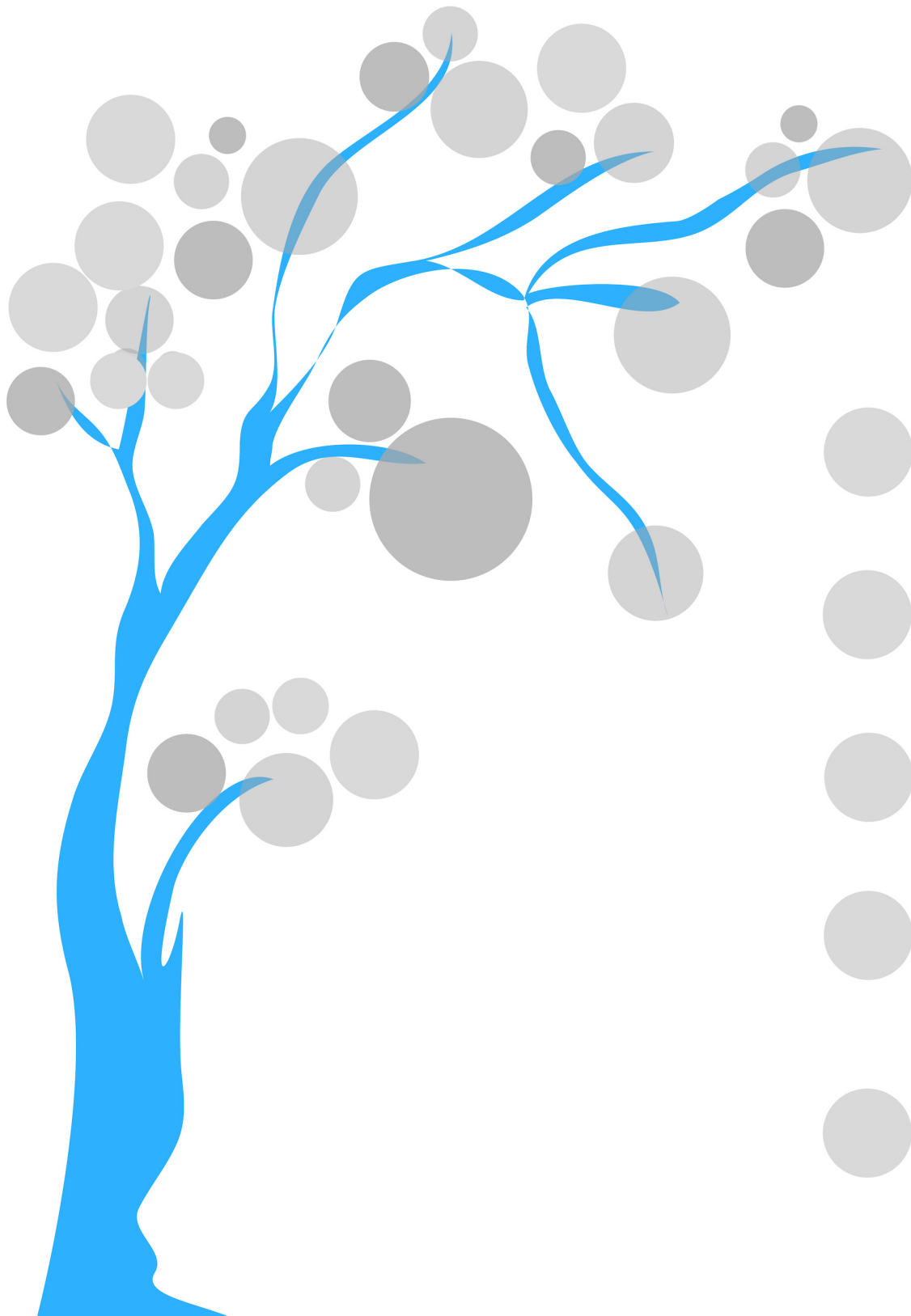


OYSTER MUSHROOMS
(*Pleurotus sp.*)



March 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

MY NATURE JOURNAL

March



Phenology Calendar

March 2023



Make a note or draw a picture of weather happenings, first birds, flowers
& other signs of changing seasons

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			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	31	

notes

March Bird List

Birds spotted this month

March Animal List

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month

March 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

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.