

April 2025

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

Getting to
Know Your
Plant
Neighbors

Start a
Sky
Journal

Tree
Jokes!

Wonderful
Willows & Magical
Magnolias

Seasonal poems,
activities, nature
journal pages & more

From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Happy April! What are you hoping to do in nature this month?

We just got back from a week in Arkansas and it was so much fun to jump into spring there when it's still pretty wintery where we live in Minnesota. We hiked a lot, explored a cave, identified wildflowers that were new to us, gathered wild clay, collected rocks, visited state parks, nibbled on redbud flowers, bird watched (we love listening to the mockingbirds that we don't have up north!), went to a nature talk about snakes, watched local wildlife like turtles and lizards, and lots more.

This month, I'm working on finishing up a book I'm writing about making art materials from wild and invasive plants and natural materials. I'll be doing some presentations around the state to show others how to use nature to make paintbrushes, ink, paint, paper and more. It's been really fun but a lot of work and I'll be really glad when I can take a break and just enjoy nature when I'm finished!

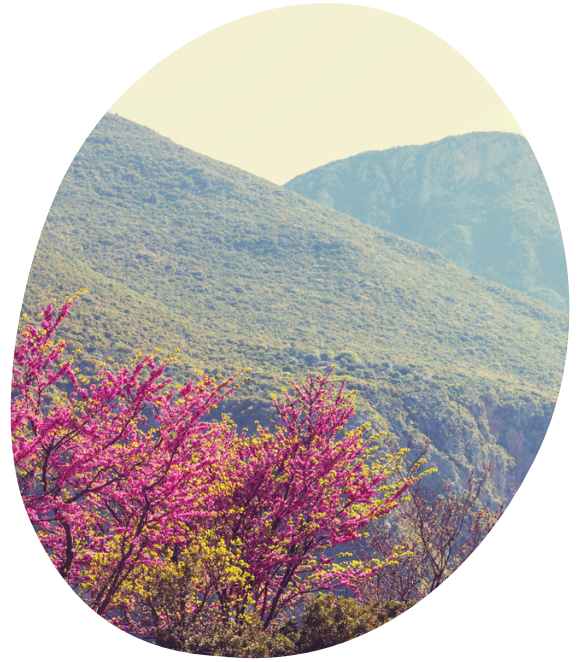
Foraging season is right around the corner here and I can't wait for spring's wild edible and medicinal plants to arrive like ramps, nettles, motherwort, chickweed, violets and dandelions.

My kids are looking forward to storm watching, hiking, boating, flower gardening, swimming, kite flying, bike riding, beach combing, eating dandelion fritters and lots more.

What are you looking forward to doing in nature this month?

I hope that wherever you are, 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 us online at magicalchildhood.com/wildkids

Go Wild in April!

10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

Find some dried native flower heads in nature & scatter the seeds someplace that needs some wildflowers

Look for the Lyrids meteor shower late at night on April 22-23

Start an April nature jar & fill it with natural items like cool or pretty rocks, sea shells, dried seed pods & feathers

Take a night walk or a picture of the full moon on April 13

Start a sky journal

Look for spring wild foods to forage like ramps, wild violets, nettles, chickweed, dandelion flowers or morels

Go around your yard or neighborhood & draw or take a picture of some wild plants that you want to learn more about

Gather some spring wildflowers to press between the pages of a book

Plant a tree on Arbor Day, April 26

Go out in nature & gather trash or otherwise help the Earth on Earth Day, April 22

Tree Jokes!

Q: Why were so many people sitting under the tree?

A: It was poplar.



Q: How do two rival forests get along?

A: They sign a peace tree-ty

Q: How can you identify a dogwood tree?

A: By its bark.



Q: What looks like half a tree?

A: The other half.

Q: What did the tree say after he made an offer?

A: Take it or leaf it.



Q: What's another name for an artificial Christmas tree?

A: Faux fir.

Q: What did the little tree say to the bully tree?

A: Leaf me alone.



Q: Which side of a cherry tree has the most leaves?

A: The outside.

Q: Why was the pine tree in trouble?

A: It was knotty.



Q: How do trees get online?

A: They log in.



Q: Why can't pine trees sew?

A: They always drop their needles.

Q: How can you get down from a tree?

A: You can't - down comes from a duck.



Q: What is the saddest tree?

A: The weeping willow.

Q: What does Obi-Wan Kenobi say after he plants a tree?

A: May the forest be with you.

Q: What type of tree fits in one hand?

A: A palm tree.

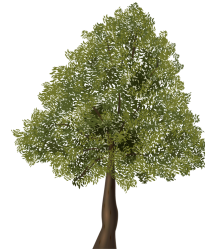


Q: How many trees can you plant in an empty forest?

A: One. It's not empty anymore after that.

Q: Where do squirrels go during the summer?

A: beech trees.

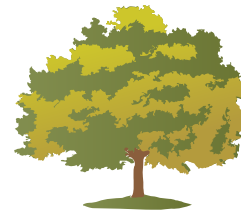


Q: Why do trees do poorly on math tests?

A: They get stumped by the problems.

Q: What did the beaver say to the tree?

A: Been nice gnawing you.



Q: Why did the Sugar Maple go to the dentist?

A: He needed a root canal.

Q: What did the tree do after the bank closed?

A: He started his own branch.



Q: Why did the evergreen tree go to decorating school?

A: So it could spruce up the forest.

Q: What did the tree wear to the beach?

A: Swim trunks.

Q: What's as big as a tree but weighs nothing?

A: The tree's shadow.



Q: Why do fig-mulberry trees miss more school than other trees?

A: Because they are sycamore.



Q: Which trees wear winter coats?

A: Fir trees.

Q: How do you describe a tree who steals things?

A: Shady.

Why you should get to know your neighbor plants!



Do you know the plants that are growing in your yard and neighborhood? There are so many reasons to get to know what's growing around you.

Sometimes there are tasty and nutritious wild plants growing right under your nose!

We have found lemony wood sorrel for nibbling, delicious lemon balm for tea, super healthy nettles for soups and smoothies (watch out for the sting before they are cooked or blended!), and tasty lambsquarters for soups growing right in our back yard, plus lots of others. For many years before we learned about foraging, we either pulled these as weeds or ignored them completely, not knowing we had free food right in our yard.

Sometimes there are helpful herbs right there for free.

My kids and I have fun going to health food stores and looking at all the herbal supplements other people can buy that we see all the time in the wild. Some of the ones that we see all over that other people pay to buy are milk thistle, dandelion root, hawthorn, elderberries, echinacea, burdock root, vervain, horsetail, motherwort, mugwort, nettle leaf, mullein, yarrow, witch hazel, lion's mane mushroom and raspberry leaf, just to name a few!

Every time we take the time to learn about a plant that has popped up in our yard, we have found great ways to use it.

A few years ago, invasive Asiatic dayflowers started growing in our herb garden. I looked them up and found out that they were used to make paint in Japan and we've done awesome art projects with them since then.



Many herbalists and foragers believe that plants will appear when we need them.

It's a long-held belief by many foragers and herbalists that if you start to see one kind of plant a lot that it serves a purpose for a problem you might have, especially if you start seeing it when you didn't before.

That has happened with us -- nettles (which are very high in iron) suddenly arrived for the first time in our garden when I was severely anemic and needed weekly iron infusions. Motherwort started popping up wherever I went when I was struggling with stress and healing from childbirth, which are two of its biggest benefits.

It's probably coincidence, but I have learned to look up plants that start turning up all around me. Every time I have researched my plant neighbors I found wonderful things to love about them and great ways to use them!

How to get to know your neighbor plants

Want to start to learn about the plants growing around you?

The first step is to just walk around and look for plants you see a lot that you don't know much about. Maybe you don't even know their names.

Find just one or two at a time that you want to learn about so you don't get overwhelmed.

Once you find a plant you want to learn about you and your grown ups can do several things:

Take a picture of it and upload it to iNaturalist via their free app. If you have a guess at what it is, you can enter that. Even if you don't, you can upload it. Thousands of people in your area can then help you ID it.

Take a picture of it and have a grown up share it to a group like Foraging 101 on Facebook (a large foraging group that our family runs). Post the picture and say your general location (like "Arkansas" or "Northern Canada") and people will comment with their best guesses and ways they like to use that plant. Keep in mind that people on foraging groups are often wrong, so always do your own research once you have suggested IDs.

Bring a foraging ID book with you and try to identify plants with that. You can check some foraging ID books out of the library and try them out to see which one is the best fit.

From there, do some reading online and in books to learn about what people use the plant for, whether it's native to your region, and other good things to know.

When you research a plant, keep in mind that every plant has some sort of use. Some are invasive and you can feel good pulling them and using them for art materials, food, medicine or even compost tea. Some are not edible for us but are native plants that are important for nature. It's fun to learn about them and find ways to appreciate them!

If you like, start a notebook or nature journal of the plants you learn. You can draw them or paste in a picture of each one and say the things you've learned about them, how they are used, when you first spotted them, and what you like about them.

Start a Sky Journal!

Here's something fun that I've been doing that I thought you might like to try. Every day, I take one picture of the sky and I add it to an ongoing collage for the month.

I usually take my sky picture in the morning, but sometimes I take it later on in the day if the moon is up in daytime, if there are really cool clouds out, or if the sky looks really pretty or dramatic. Sometimes I include a little bit of the trees or rooftops and sometimes it's just sky.

I use a collage grid in Canva but you can use any collage maker or you can just take them for yourself, put them in a special photo folder, print them out for your nature journal, or do something else creative with them.

My oldest daughter has been watching me do this project and now she's taking daily sky photos too. It's a fun way to track the weather, focus on nature, and be creative.

Here's my sky journal for March. I missed a few days at the start but I don't mind. Nothing has to be perfect to be fun!



Poems for April

APRIL

By Enid Blyton

Oh, April brings the cuckoo-bird, and April brings the rain,
April hangs a hundred sunny raindrops in the lane,
She can wash the sky with woolly clouds of purest white,
And gaily dress it up in rainbows, curving out of sight.



Oh, April hangs the chestnut trees with spires of white and pink,
And kisses all the primroses along the river's brink,
She peeps into the tiny nests where eggs are hidden well,
And searches out the purple violets growing in the dell.



Oh, April swings the apple blossom, sweet against the sky
And chases all the bob-tail rabbits scuttling gaily by,
She dances with the meadow cowslips, drooping heads of gold,
Oh, April is the sweetest month that any year can hold!

April
By Sara Teasdale



The roofs are shining from the rain,
The sparrows twitter as they fly,
And with a windy April grace
The little clouds go by.

Yet the back-yards are bare and brown
With only one unchanging tree
I could not be so sure of spring
Save that it sings in me.

The Eagle
Alfred, Lord Tennyson



He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

WILLOW

(Salix sp.)



Willow trees are really interesting trees that have been used for all different purposes throughout time. They belong to the Salix genus, which has about 350 different species of trees and shrubs, and they are found throughout much of the world.

One neat thing about willows is that you can use them to make willow water to root plants. They have a natural rooting compound in them that you can dip cuttings into and it will help them grow roots to make new plants.

Willows are so high in rooting compound that people make willow arches with long willow cuttings to make magical seeming tunnels and garden structures.



Willow trees are some of the first trees to flower in spring, making them great food sources for wildlife like bees and hummingbirds. They also help nature by stabilizing stream banks and providing nesting spaces for birds.



Willow trees were the original source for aspirin's salicylic acid, an anti-inflammatory compound that lessens pain. People still make pain relieving tea from willow bark today.



Willow trees are very fast growing and farmers have traditionally used their new branches for feeding livestock with "tree hay."

Artists use willow branches for making charcoal, and they are also used for dyeing, among many other uses.



WILLOW
SALIX ERIOCEPHALA





MAGNOLIA



Magnolia trees belong to the Magnoliaceae family, which includes over 200 species. They are found all over the world and some of them can grow up to 80 feet tall!

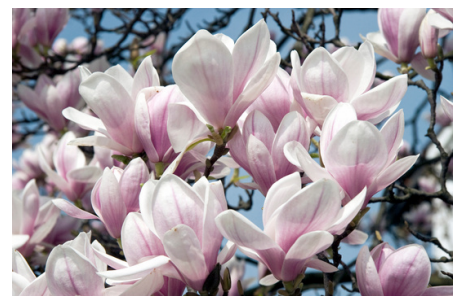
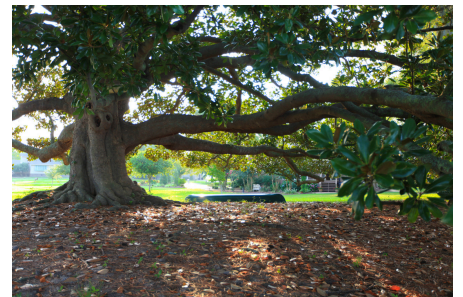
Magnolia trees are some of the oldest tree species in the world. In fact, they were originally pollinated by beetles because they first appeared before there were bees!

They have beautiful flowers in the spring and many species have flowers that are known to be edible. There's a wonderful blog in the UK called Handmade Apothecary that even made a list of how all different kinds of edible magnolia petals taste! Some of them taste like ginger, lemon, cardamom and even chili powder, and others taste more flowery. People forage magnolias for teas, syrups, salads, spices and more. **There are no known poisonous magnolias, but there are a lot of species so if you decide to forage them be sure to look up information on the species you have to be sure it's safe.**

Magnolia trees have a lot of benefits for homeowners and for nature. They have been shown to improve air quality by absorbing pollutants. They even reduce noise pollution because they have very dense foliage (their leaves are tightly packed together) so they muffle noise in cities.

They provide shade and help cool down properties, so they're nice for hot areas in the summertime. They also help reduce storm water runoff and erosion, and provide food and shelter for lots of birds and insects.

People have used magnolia flowers and bark for medicine for a very long time, too. Magnolia is often used as a treatment for anxiety and depression, and it has also been used as a treatment for allergies, headaches and even reducing tremors in Parkinson's disease patients, among other uses. Scientists are studying a lot of ways to use them in medicine.



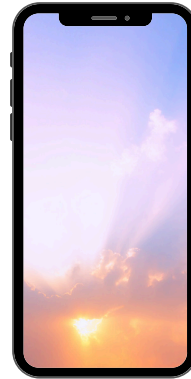
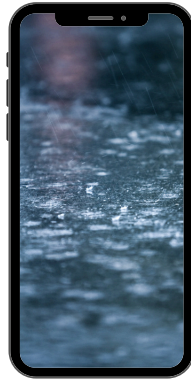
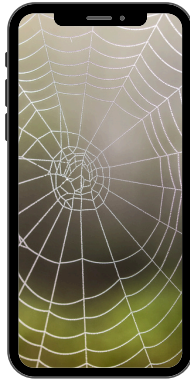
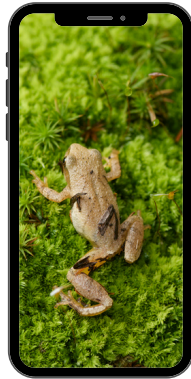
MAGNOLIA
(MAGNOLIACEAE)



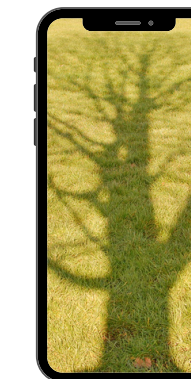
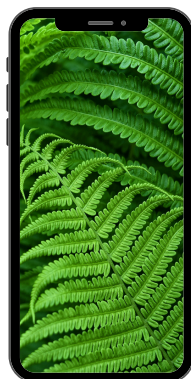
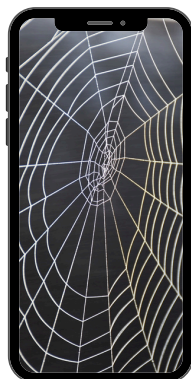
APRIL

Nature Photo Challenge

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



- | | | | | | |
|----|---------|----|---------------|----|------------|
| 1 | Bright | 11 | Shell | 21 | Silhouette |
| 2 | Sky | 12 | Shiny | 22 | Edible |
| 3 | Changes | 13 | Blue | 23 | Butterfly |
| 4 | Feather | 14 | Caterpillar | 24 | Seedling |
| 5 | Flower | 15 | Bumpy | 25 | Shadow |
| 6 | Water | 16 | Pattern | 26 | Many |
| 7 | Sunset | 17 | Web | 27 | Delicate |
| 8 | Wild | 18 | Tiny | 28 | Evening |
| 9 | Pink | 19 | Black & White | 29 | Spring |
| 10 | Fluffy | 20 | Symmetrical | 30 | Yellow |



My Nature Journal

April

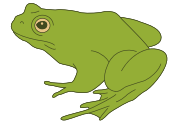


Phenology Calendar

Keep track of all of the firsts in nature that you see this month!
Write in firsts like first robin seen, bluebells in bloom, nettles or ramps spotted,
spring peepers (frogs) heard, heavy rains or windy days, and so on.
Draw a picture if you like.

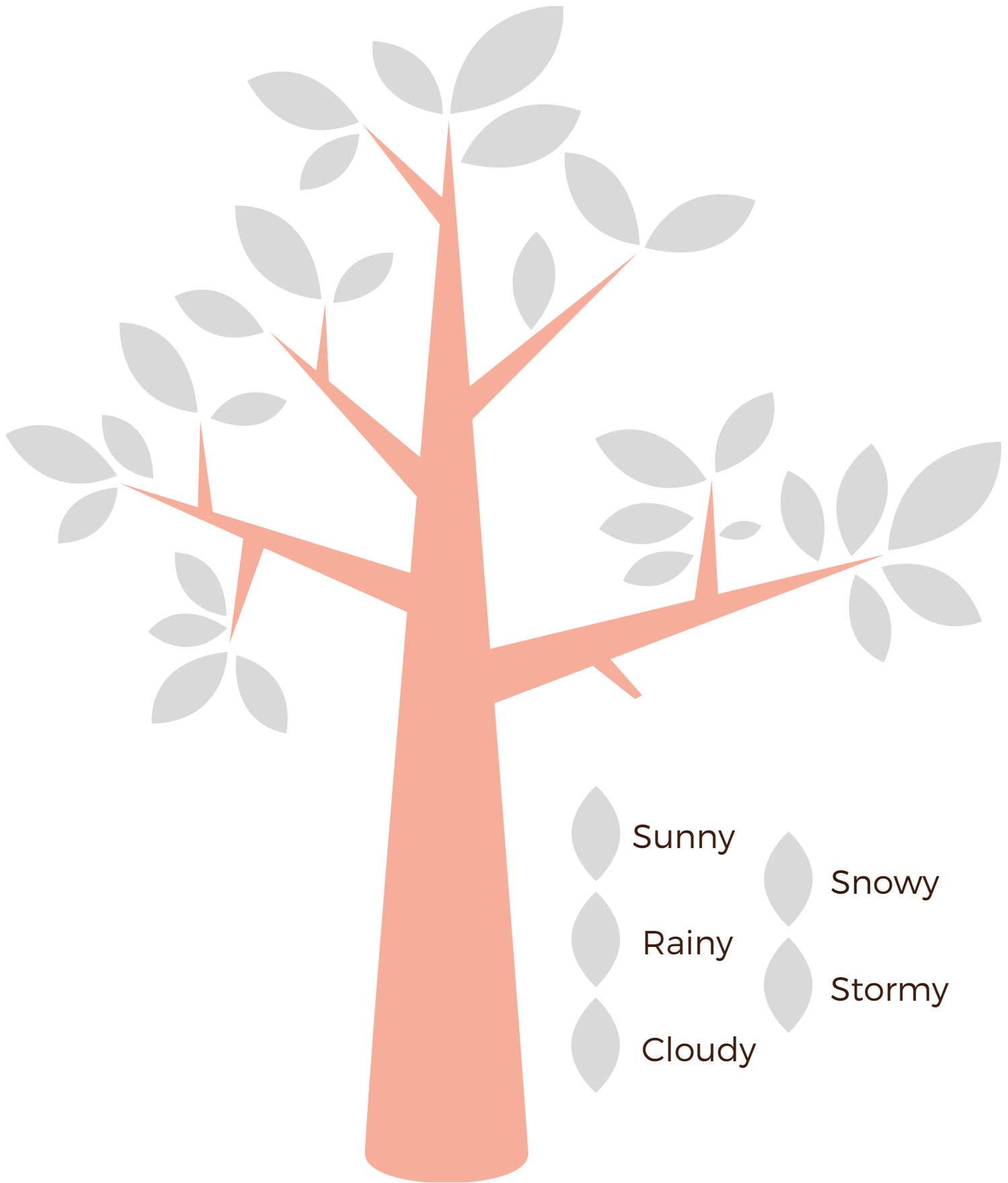


APRIL 2025



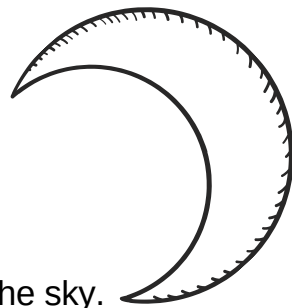
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

April Weather Tree

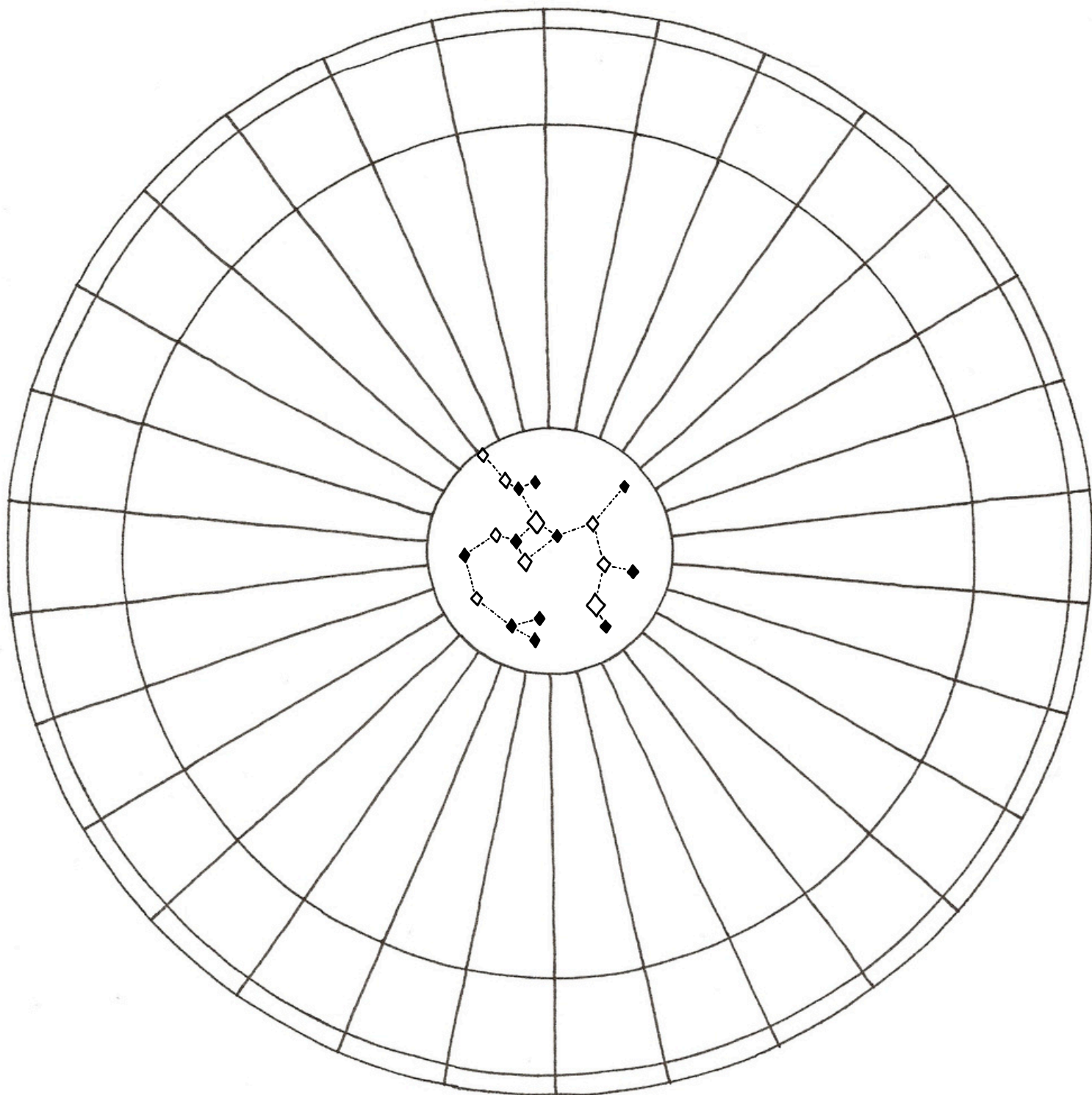


April

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 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