

*October 2026*

# WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS



**Take Part in  
Wild Inktober!**

**Oodles of Easy Ways to  
Make Wild Paint & Ink**

**Spooky Plants**

**October Nature  
Collection Challenge**

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



# From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

## Happy October

What are you hoping to do in nature this month?

Here in Minnesota, the trees have started changing colors and some of them have already lost a lot of leaves. I love the way some trees start to change color and lose their leaves as soon as September starts, but other trees just keep on going with their green leaves well into fall. I write Wild Kids from my upstairs bedroom desk right by a window, and I always look down over our cherry tree as I write. Right now it is still fully green and full of leaves, even though the ash next to it is yellow and already half bare.

This October will be the second time I'll be doing Wild Inktober, which is my own variation on a popular October art challenge called Inktober. In Inktober, people try to do an ink drawing each day of the month. Last year, I decided to take part but to do it with wild ink that I made myself each day from plants, mushrooms and other nature items. You can see a little bit of the first page of my Wild Inktober journal from last year in the picture to the right. It was so much fun that I decided to do it again this year and to show you how to do it too, if you'd like to take part. We have instructions for how to make your own wild inks (it's so much easier than you might think!) in this month's magazine.

October is such a fun, beautiful month. I'm looking forward to the nice mix of cool and warm days, the bright colors of the changing trees, the wild mushrooms we can forage, the migrating birds, and so much more. What are you looking forward to this month?

I hope wherever you are, you have a wonderful wild month!

*Alicia*



*Part of a page from my October  
2025 Wild Inktober journal*

### 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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# Go Wild in October

## 10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

Join in  
Wild Inktober by  
painting a little  
doodle every day  
with a wild ink

Visit an apple  
orchard or  
pumpkin patch

Head away  
from city lights the  
night of the 7<sup>th</sup> to  
watch the  
Draconids meteor  
shower

Punch holes in  
colorful fall  
leaves to make  
natural confetti

Look for the  
Orionids  
Meteor Shower  
on October 21<sup>st</sup>  
& 22<sup>nd</sup>

Take part in  
our October nature  
item collection  
challenge

Gather some  
grapevines or  
Virginia  
Creeper vines  
to make a fall  
wreath



Head to a  
riverbank or  
somewhere else  
rocky to search for  
fossils & cool  
rocks

Look for the  
full moon on  
the 26th

Sit in nature  
very quiet & still for a  
few minutes & see  
how close wildlife like  
birds, lizards &  
squirrels will come to  
you

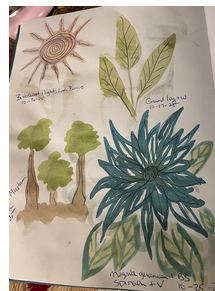
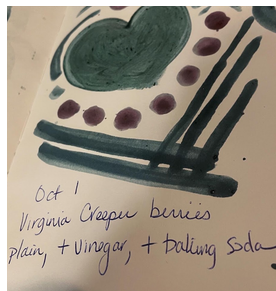


# Take Part in Wild Inktober!

Have you heard of InkTober?

It's a fun art challenge that a man named Jake Parker created to improve his art skills back in 2009. He combined the words ink and October to call it Inktober. His challenge was just to draw something with ink every day. Thousands of people take part every year.

Last year, I wrote a book about making art materials out of nature items called Wild Art. I had so much fun making natural inks that I decided to take part in Inktober by painting a little doodle every day that I could with wild ink. Here are some examples of little doodles I did.



This year, I'm doing it again and thought you might like to join in!

There are lots of ways you can make your own wild inks. It only takes a minute for many of them and you don't need anything special. You can use grass, a few flower petals, and even things like spinach and blueberries from your fridge!



# 3 Easy Ways to Make Wild Ink

There are lots of ways to make ink from natural materials. Some people boil leaves, flowers and berries for a long time. Some people soak nature items like walnuts, sometimes adding chemicals or iron items like nails to change the colors.

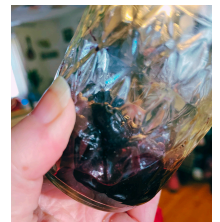
When I wrote Wild Art, I wanted all of the projects to be easy and basically free, and I wanted kids to be able to do them pretty much by themselves without needing an adult to do some of the work. These are the methods that are my favorites for that reason.

Here is a little bit of information from the book about some ways you can make wild ink.

## Freeze & thaw

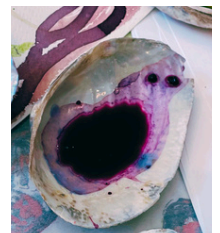
This is my favorite way by far to use things like berries. You get really deep colors, it's super easy, and you can still eat your berries if they're edible!

All you do is put wild berries like elderberries, mulberries, blueberries or black raspberries in a jar like a mason jar, and freeze them. You can even do this with grocery store berries once they're starting to get a little too mushy or dried out and old to eat.



Once they're frozen, take them out of the freezer and let them thaw at room temperature. After a little while, you'll see dark liquid start to collect at the bottom of the jar. After a few hours there will be a wonderful, bright juice inside that you can use for your ink or paint.

The more time you let them thaw, the more juice they'll release. You can also speed this up by very briefly micro-waving the jar (remember not to cook them though, since this can change the color of your ink).



You can also do this with some plant parts like fresh green leaves. Just freeze, thaw and squeeze out the bright liquid.

## Mortar and pestle (or rocks!)

This is another easy, fun way to make ink and paint. Just use a mortar and pestle (or a sturdy bowl or recycled container and a rock or other hard object). Put your berries, petals or leaves in the mortar or bowl. Add just a tiny bit of vinegar or hot water if needed, and then stir and smash.

Strain out the solid parts by pressing it through a small wire mesh strainer, or scoop it into a bit of cheesecloth and squeeze out your ink, or just dip your paintbrush right into the colored liquid and paint from there.

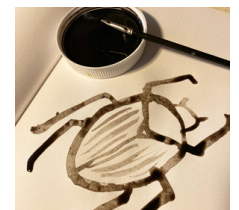
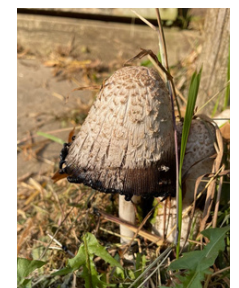


## Inky Cap Mushroom Ink



Inky cap mushrooms (*Coprinopsis atramentaria*) and Shaggy Ink-Cap (*Coprinus Comatus*) are called that because their caps dissolve into black ink! They are not poisonous and are safe to handle, and very common. You can find them in fields and lawns, especially after a few days of rain. In a few days you'll notice they sort of melt away in the grass and disappear. We find them most often in the spring and fall.

Just gather some of the mushroom caps in a jar and let them sit on the counter for a few hours and they will turn into liquid! Strain the ink through a strainer into a jar with a lid. It will last indefinitely.





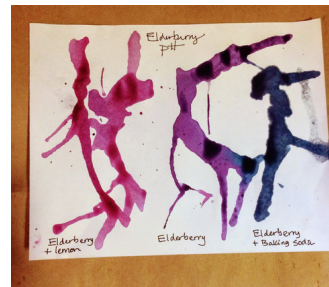
# Change the Colors of Your Natural Inks and Watercolors

Some plants that are purple or blue like wild grapes, elderberries, chokeberries (aronia berries), black beans, violets, butterfly pea flowers, cornflowers, purple cabbage, blackberries, grape hyacinth flowers, blueberries, and black raspberries have natural chemicals in them called anthocyanins. These make the plants especially healthy to eat and give them their blue or purple (or occasionally red) color, but they also do something really magical.



Anthocyanins are pH indicators. That means that their ink changes color if you add an acid or base. That's why when you make violet jelly with pretty purple violets, it will turn bright pink when you add lemon juice to the recipe.

**So you can have one ink like elderberry ink, and you can change it to lots of colors!**



**Add an acid like lemon juice or vinegar to make a vibrant hot pink.**

**Add baking soda to make blue (or another base like alum).**



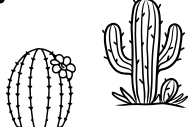
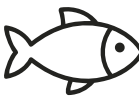
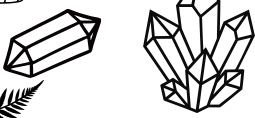
Even your tap water will slightly change the color of the inks and paints you make with anthocyanins, since it may be a little bit more acidic or alkaline (basic).

*(Excerpted from Wild Art: Awesome Art Projects Using Wild & Invasive Plants & Other Nature Items, by Alicia Bayer)*

Some people like to use a list of prompts like our monthly nature photo prompts to get inspired for what to draw, and some people just draw whatever they feel like each day.

If you'd like to use prompts, here is a list to inspire you, with doodles as examples.

# Wild Inktober Prompts

- |    |           |                                                                                     |    |           |                                                                                       |
|----|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Leaf      |    | 16 | Moon      |    |
| 2  | Bug       |    | 17 | Snake     |    |
| 3  | Clouds    |    | 18 | Plant     |    |
| 4  | Flower    |    | 19 | Lightning |    |
| 5  | Nest      |   | 20 | Waves     |   |
| 6  | Feather   |  | 21 | Snail     |  |
| 7  | Vine      |  | 22 | Wind      |  |
| 8  | Mountain  |  | 23 | Branch    |  |
| 9  | Tree      |  | 24 | Bouquet   |  |
| 10 | Butterfly |  | 25 | Nut       |  |
| 11 | Mushroom  |  | 26 | Cactus    |  |
| 12 | Fish      |  | 27 | Crystal   |  |
| 13 | Snowflake |  | 28 | Fern      |  |
| 14 | Grassy    |  | 29 | Print     |  |
| 15 | Stars     |  | 30 | Pumpkin   |  |
|    |           |                                                                                     | 31 | Spiderweb |  |



# October

Try to head outside each day and collect a nature item that goes along with that day's theme. Display your collection in a basket, on a nature table, or in a nature jar.

## NATURE COLLECTION CHALLENGE



1 ORANGE

2 TINY

3 SYMMETRICAL

4 SHINY

5 INSECT

6 CRACKED

7 PATTERN

8 FLOWER

9 FEATHER

10 SEED

11 RED

12 ROUND

13 COLORFUL

14 BLACK

15 THIN

16 SHARP

17 GREEN

18 NUT

19 DRIED

20 ASYMMETRICAL

21 LEAF

22 HOLE

23 CHANGED

24 WEIRD

25 FUZZY

26 FRAGILE

27 WHITE

28 EDIBLE

29 ROUGH

30 PRETTY

31 SPOOKY



# SPOOKY PLANTS

Ten fantastically spooky plants & fungi from around the world



Black Bat Flower  
(*Tacca chantrieri*)

This tropical plant can be grown as a houseplant. It blooms in the fall – the perfect time of year for it.



Ghost Plant  
(*Monotropa uniflora*)

This plant is a parasite that feeds off fungus & makes no chlorophyll so it's not green. It is native to North America & we talked about it in the Feb 2020 issue of Wild Kids.



Corpse Flower  
(*Amorphophallus titanum*)

This massive endangered plant only blooms once every 2-3 years for a couple of days. Its flower can grow up to 9 feet tall! It is named corpse (dead body) because of its terrible smell that is said to smell like rotting flesh. It actually makes heat when it blooms and with the smell, it attracts beetles & flies that feed on dead animals to pollinate it.



Jack-o-Lantern Mushrooms  
(*Omphalotus illudens*)

These bright orange mushrooms grow on dead wood and even glow in the dark! Don't ever eat them, though – they're poisonous.





**Skeleton Flower**  
(*Diphylleia grayi*)

This magical plant has white flowers that turn transparent (see through) when they get wet.



**Brain Cactus**  
(*Mammillaria elongata* 'Cristata')

This creepy cactus makes a fun & easy houseplant.



**Bleeding Tooth Fungus**  
(*Hydnellum peckii*)

This creepy looking mushroom oozes a red sap when it's growing (with projections that look like teeth growing beneath!), & then it looks perfectly normal once it's grown up. It is used for dyes & medicines, but is too bitter to eat (& who would want to?).



**Dead Man's Fingers**  
(*Xylaria polymorpha*)

These creepy looking mushrooms grow on dead & dying wood & look like fingers coming out of the ground!



**Doll's Eye Plant**  
(*Actaea pachypoda*)

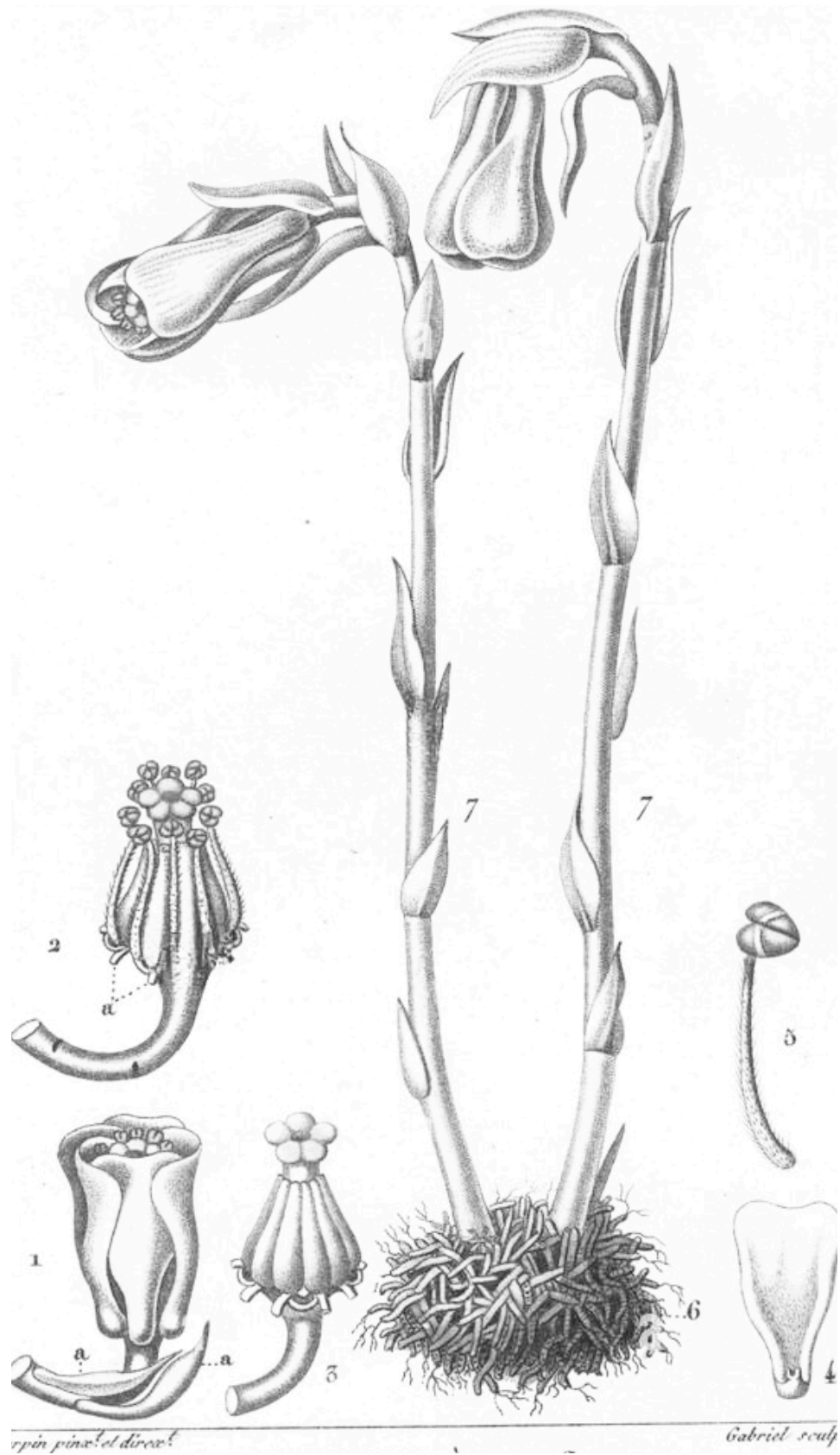
The berries on this creepy looking plant are very poisonous. We learned about them in the July 2026 issue of Wild Kids.



**Ghost Tree**  
(*Davidia involucrata*)

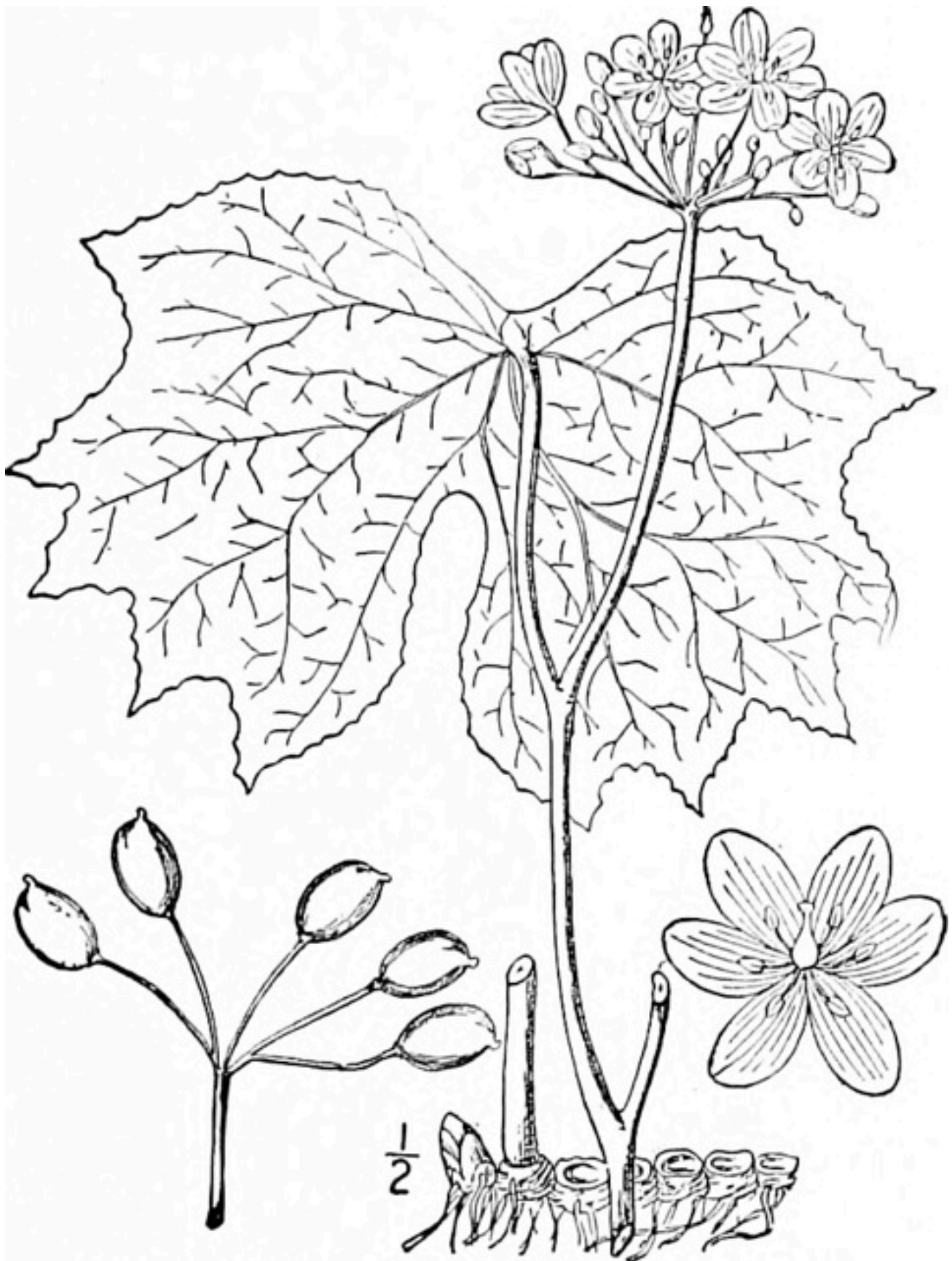
This tree is native to China and blooms tiny red flowers in the spring that have big white bracts behind them. At night it looks like the tree is full of ghosts!

GHOST PIPE  
( *Monotropa uniflora* )





SKELETON FLOWER  
( *Diphylleia grayi* )



# OCTOBER POETRY

## Spells

by James Reeves



I dance and dance without any feet –  
This is the spell of the ripening wheat.

With never a tongue I've a tale to tell –  
This is the meadow-grasses spell.

I give you health without any fee –  
This is the spell of the apple tree.

I rhyme and riddle without any book –  
This is the spell of the bubbling brook.

Without my legs I run forever –  
This is the spell of the mighty river.

I fall forever and not at all –  
This is the spell of the waterfall.

Without a voice I roar aloud –  
This is the spell of the thunder cloud.

No button or seam has my white coat –  
This is the spell of the leaping goat.



## Witchery by Frank Dempster Sherman

Out of the purple drifts,  
From the shadow sea of night,  
On tides of musk a moth uplifts  
Its weary wings of white.

Is it a dream or ghost  
Of a dream that comes to me,  
Here in the twilight on the coast,  
Blue cinctured by the sea?

Fashioned of foam and froth—  
And the dream is ended soon,  
And, lo, whence came the moon-white moth  
Comes now the moth-white moon!





# My Nature Journal

# October





# OCTOBER

## Phenology Calendar



Keep track of observations in nature that you see this month.  
Write in things you notice and draw a picture if you like.

Examples: ladybugs coming inside the house, migrating birds leaving or arriving, woolly bear caterpillars spotted, over 5 inches of rain, inky cap mushrooms growing in the lawn, first frost of the season

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 27  | 28  | 29  | 30  | 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  |

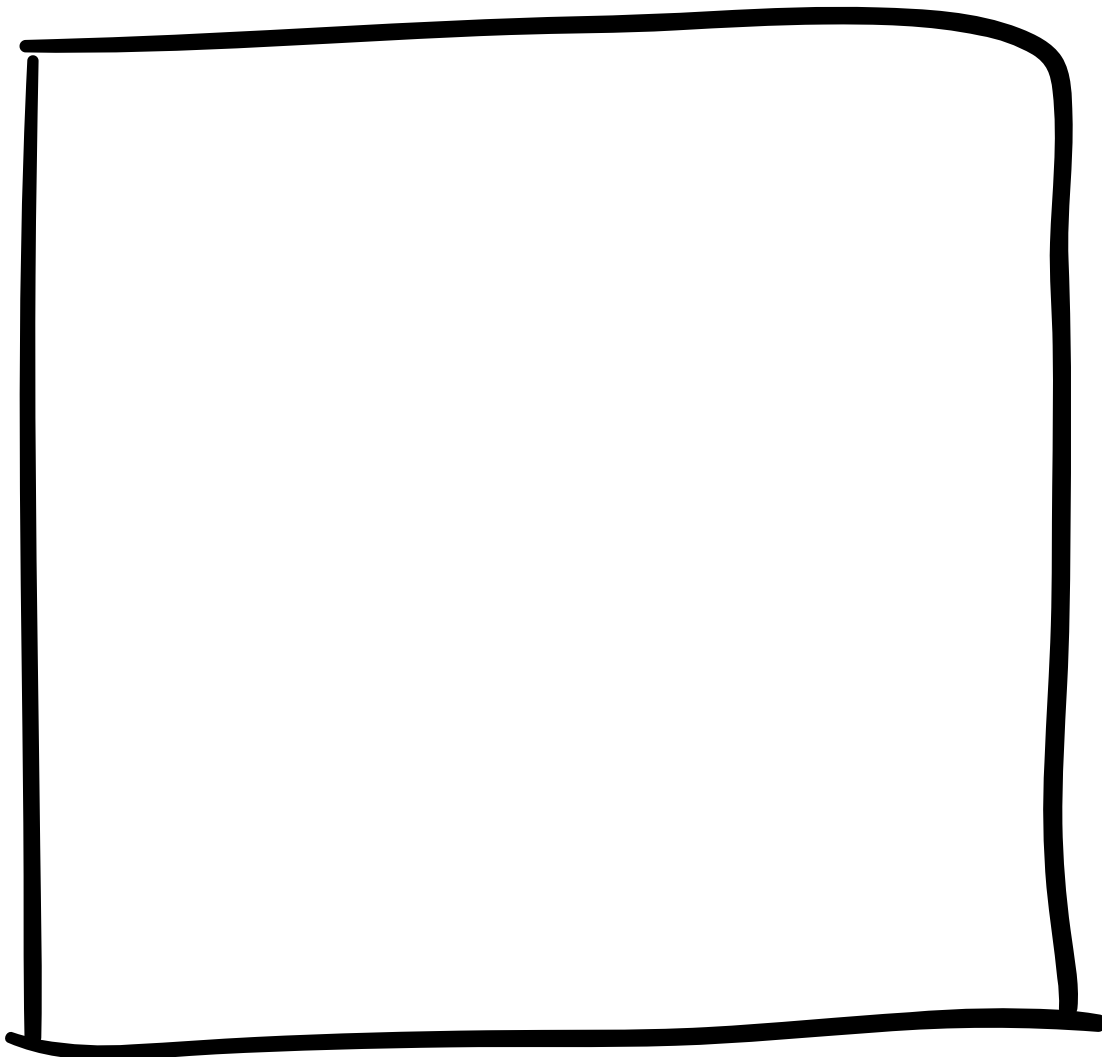
# *Nature Study Close Up*

I found: \_\_\_\_\_

Latin name: \_\_\_\_\_

Where found: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Time of Day: \_\_\_\_\_

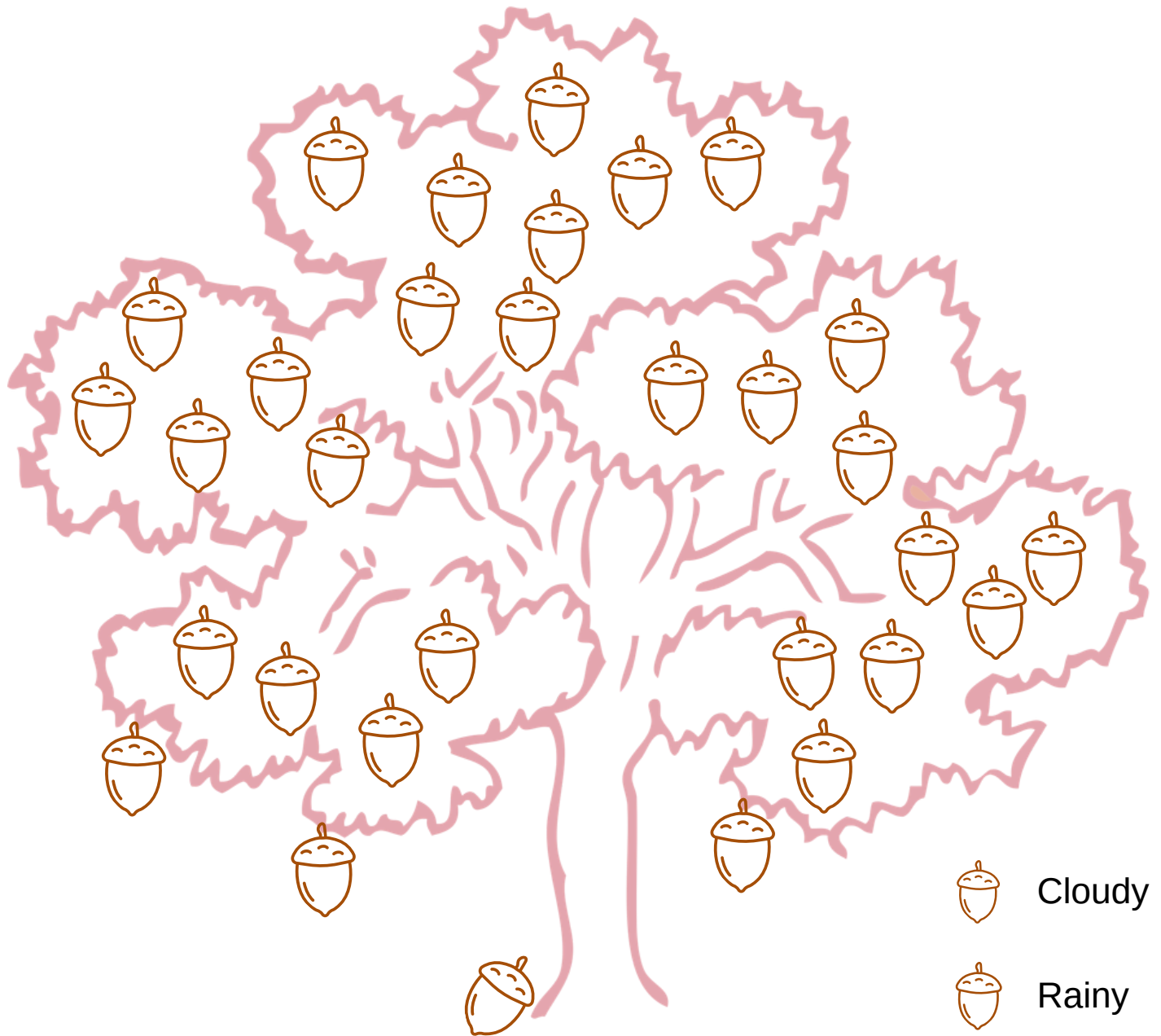


Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# October Weather Tree



Cloudy



Rainy



Sunny



Stormy



Snowy

# *October Bird List*

Birds spotted this month

# *October Animal List*

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month

# October 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

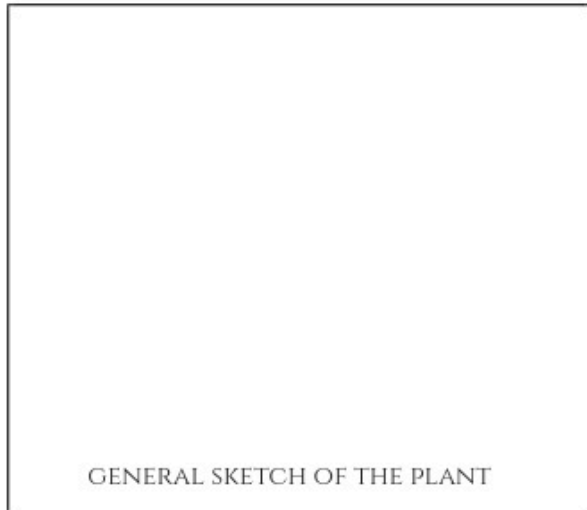
Week 3 Observations

Week 4 Observations

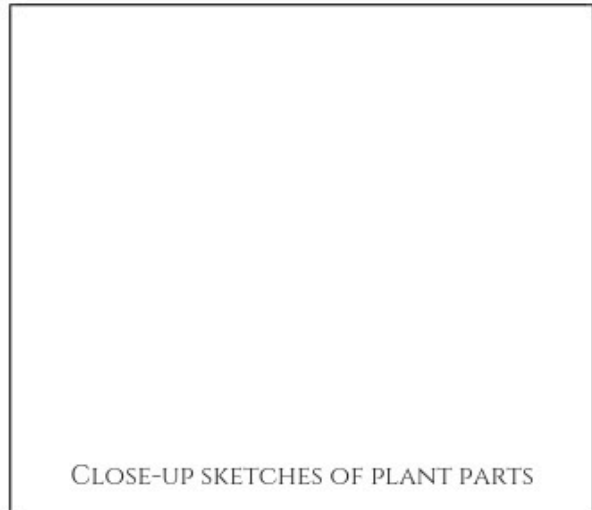


# MY FORAGING GUIDE FOR:

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GENERAL SKETCH OF THE PLANT



CLOSE-UP SKETCHES OF PLANT PARTS

LATIN NAME \_\_\_\_\_

WHERE FOUND \_\_\_\_\_

PARTS USED \_\_\_\_\_

LOOKALIKES & HOW TO POSITIVELY ID:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

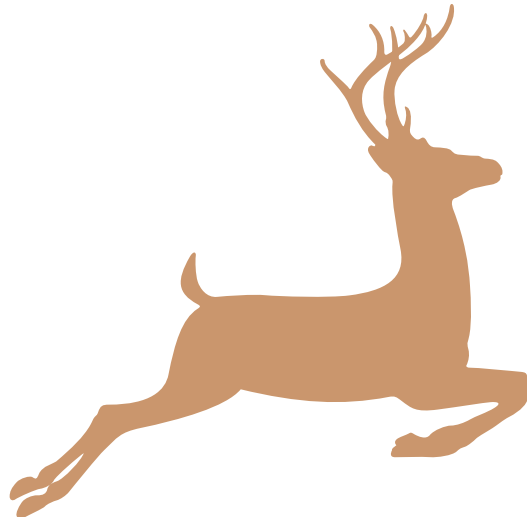
WARNINGS: \_\_\_\_\_

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](https://magicalchildhood.com/wildkids) to learn more.