

*April 2019*

# WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

Make a Toad House!

10 Wild Plants to  
Forage in April

Eating Flowers

10 Fun Ways to Study Nature this  
month --no matter where you live

Seasonal poems, activities,  
nature journal pages and more!



# From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

*Welcome April!*

No matter where in the world you live, April is a magical month, the start of all kinds of new adventures you can have outside. Spring may be blossoming where you live, or the world may be getting cooler.

Here in Minnesota where we live, the world is finally warming up again. We've been buried under snow for a lot of months, and it's a happy time when birds return, baby animals are born, flowers start to bloom and we begin to plant our gardens. April is also when some of our family's favorite foods start to appear -- ramps, wild asparagus, morel mushrooms, nettles and more. What is April like where you live?

This issue marks the fourth Wild Kids Magazine. We've been having fun putting the magazine together for you but we'd love to include something from you in an upcoming issue!

Would you like to contribute? Here's what we're looking for:

- ~ Photos and drawings of nature by kids
- ~ Photos of wild kids (you!) outdoors
- ~ Foraging stories, pictures or recipes
- ~ Articles about nature studies or outdoor activities you love
- ~ Poems about nature
- ~ Questions, letters or anything else you'd like to share!

Our family is going to be very busy outside starting this month. We forage a lot of wild edible plants and we also grow back yard and front yard gardens, plus we do lots of stuff outside when the weather is nice enough that we can. We also just adopted a big black dog we named Moose, and we're looking forward to spending lots of time with Moose outside!

What are you hoping to do outdoors this month?

Have a 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](http://www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids).

# Get Wild in April

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

Color in the circles of the ones you do!

Visit a zoo or  
nature center

Get a stack of  
index cards and  
paint the sky  
each day

Set a goal for  
how many  
species of birds  
you can see this  
month

Read a book  
outside!

Have a picnic  
in the yard

Eat some  
flowers (we tell  
you some good  
ones in this  
issue!)

Look for  
constellations in  
the night sky

Climb a tree  
and take a  
picture of what  
the world looks  
like from up  
there

Learn to ID  
10 kinds of  
flowers

Cut swatches of  
colors from scraps  
of magazines or  
junk mail & see if  
you can find their  
matches in nature



# Make a Toad House!

Toads and frogs are helpful friends in our yards and gardens. A single toad or frog can eat up to 1,000 pests every night, including insects that bug us like mosquitoes and flies, and pests that hurt our plants like slugs, snails & grasshoppers.

You may already have toads or frogs living in your yard (they especially like wood piles, rock piles and shady areas under shrubs), but you can also help attract them by providing them with some shady spots, a water source, and a toad house.



Some people buy fancy toad houses, but it's fun to make your own. You can make one out of anything, but toads and frogs especially like rocks and unglazed pottery because those stay cool and absorb moisture. A broken flower pot makes a perfect toad house. Bury it on its side about halfway in the dirt with a flat dirt floor.

It's fun to put toad houses out in the open where everyone will see them, but if you want frogs or toads to really move in, they prefer a sheltered, shady spot. Tuck your toad house under shrubs or in tall grasses and flowers so your toad will feel safe. These plants will also help attract the creatures he'll want to snack on!

Be sure to cover the entrance partly so your toad will be protected from predators. If possible, give him a back door too (just knock a hole in the back of your pot or leave a gap in the rocks).

**Remember to never use pesticides in your yard if you have toads!** Poisoned insects will poison toads and frogs too.

If there is no water near your toad house, put out a small dish with rocks and water.

Feel free to have fun and get creative with your toad house. You can glue pretty rocks or dragon tears on the outside, paint it, or put up some fun little signs to welcome him home.

We have links to see more ideas and pictures at the Wild Kids Magazine website.

Send in your pictures of your toad house and we'll feature them in next month's Wild Kids Magazine!





# 10 Wild Plants to Forage in April

April is a month when all kinds of wonderful wild foods are at their best. It is spring in the Northern Hemisphere and fall in the Southern Hemisphere. Here are some of the best ones in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.

## Northern Hemisphere



*Ramps*



*Wild Asparagus*



*Violets*



*Nettles*



*Chickweed*

## Southern Hemisphere



*Purslane*



*Lilly Pillies*



*Wild Olives*



*Rose Hips*



*Hawthorn Berries*

*Be sure to always follow all safety and courtesy rules when foraging for wild foods!*



# EATING FLOWERS

Did you know you can eat some flowers? Not all flowers are edible, but lots of them are. Their tastes are all different. Some are sweet, some are mild and some even taste peppery.

A lot of people use flowers to make jellies and syrups, like lilac syrup and rose petal jam. Some larger flowers are good dipped in batter and fried, like dandelion fritters and elderflower fritters, or you can use them to hold dips or desserts. Other flowers are good as edible decorations on cakes, salads or soups.

Remember these rules when eating flowers:

Always be 100% sure of the type of flower you have before eating it. Not all flowers are edible and some could make you very sick or even kill you.



Always ask an adult before eating flowers, unless you have been given permission to eat a certain one. Our youngest child, Fiona, used to love to nibble nasturtium flowers from our garden when she was little. Nasturtiums are really healthy and she couldn't confuse them with any other flowers in our yard so she had permission to eat all she liked, but she knew to ask before nibbling any others.

Never eat flowers from a florist or store! They have probably been sprayed with poison to protect them from insects. Never eat any flowers if you are not 100% sure they have not been sprayed with pesticides.

Don't assume that just because a plant's flowers are safe to eat, that it is safe to eat other parts. Some plants have edible flowers but other parts are poisonous. Elder shrubs are like this -- elderberries and elderflowers are edible, but the leaves and stems are poisonous. Other plants are safe to eat the entire thing, like dandelions. Also remember with any new food, to try a little the first time just in case you are allergic.

Here are some examples of flowers you can eat.



We have a link to a whole book you can download and print about edible flowers at the Wild Kids Magazine website!



# Eating (& Drinking!) Elder Flowers



Elder flowers are some of our family's favorite flowers. They are produced by elder shrubs in early summer. Elders grow wild all over the world but most people don't notice them except this time of year when the pretty beige-white flower clusters brighten parks, roadsides, ditches, countrysides and hedgerows.

We love to make elderflower fritters, dipping the flower heads in batter and frying them. We eat them right off the stalks (don't eat the stems) with syrup, jam, honey or powdered sugar. We also love to make elderflower soda, which is naturally bubbly from wild yeast and has a wonderful lemony taste (don't let it sit too long or you'll get elderflower champagne!).

Be sure not to harvest too many elder flowers, so later in the season you can come back when they turn to elderberries!

Here are a couple of wonderful ways to enjoy elder flowers. You'll find more recipes on the Wild Kids Magazine website.

Elder flower tea helps cure stuffy noses and ward off colds that are starting to develop if taken often at the first sign of illness. This is a lovely tea to sip to fight off whatever bug is going around. It's also great for seasonal allergies. It also tastes delicious!

#### Ingredients:

- \* 2 heaping tsp dried elder flowers
- \* 1 cup boiling water

#### Directions:

1. Steep the dried elder flowers in one cup of boiling water. Stir.
2. Infuse for five minutes. Strain and add a squeeze of lemon and some honey.

Drink three to four times per day at the first sign of symptoms. Children can take half a cup, three to four times a day.



## Elderflower and Rhubarb Jam

Elderflowers pair beautifully with rhubarb, and this is a fantastic way to preserve both of these early summer harvests. Try to use red rhubarb for this jam, which will give it a beautiful pink color.

#### Ingredients:

- 6 large umbels elder flowers
- 3 pounds rhubarb, chopped small
- 6 cups (about 3 pounds) sugar
- 1 lemon

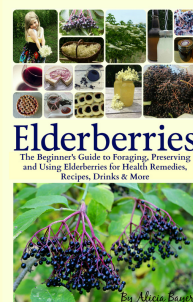


#### Directions:

1. Cut the thickest stalks from the elder flowers and tie the flowers in a square of muslin or cheesecloth in the bottom of a large bowl. Cover with rhubarb and then with the sugar.
2. Cover the bowl with foil or a plate and let sit for 12 hours. Stir gently, cover again, let sit another 12 hours.
4. Transfer the mixture to a large pan and heat gently to melt the sugar. Do not allow to boil. Return mixture to the bowl, cover again, and let sit another 12 hours.
5. Remove the bag of elder flowers and put rhubarb mixture into a pan. Add the juice of the lemon and bring to a boil. Boil rapidly in open pan for 7-10 minutes, until jam wrinkles and shows signs of setting when dripped onto a cold saucer.
6. Pour into sterilized jars and can in a hot water bath for 5 minutes (longer at high altitudes), if desired.

Makes about 4 pint jars.

All recipes courtesy of Elderberries:  
The Beginner's Guide to Foraging,  
Preserving and Using Elderberries  
for Health Remedies, Recipes,  
Drinks & More, by Alicia Bayer





# Poems for April

*"April hath put a spirit of youth in everything. (Sonnet XCVIII)"*

— William Shakespeare, *Sonnets*

## Spring Song

Hark, I hear a robin calling!  
List, the wind is from the south!  
And the orchard-bloom is falling  
Sweet as kisses on the mouth.

In the dreamy vale of beeches  
Fair and faint is woven mist,  
And the river's orient reaches  
Are the palest amethyst.

Every limpid brook is singing  
Of the lure of April days;  
Every piney glen is ringing  
With the maddest roundelays.

Come and let us seek together  
Springtime lore of daffodils,  
Giving to the golden weather  
Greeting on the sun-warm hills.

— Lucy Maud Montgomery  
(author of *Anne of Green Gables*)

## April

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.

— Sara Teasdale

The first of April, some do say,  
Is set apart for All Fools' Day.  
But why the people call it so,  
Nor I, nor they themselves do know.  
But on this day are people sent  
On purpose for pure merriment.

— Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Robin's Almanac*

## Song of a Second April

APRIL this year, not otherwise  
Than April of a year ago  
Is full of whispers, full of sighs,  
Dazzling mud and dingy snow;  
Hepaticas that pleased you so  
Are here again, and butterflies.

There rings a hammering all day,  
And shingles lie about the doors;  
From orchards near and far away  
The gray wood-pecker taps and bores,  
And men are merry at their chores,  
And children earnest at their play.

The larger streams run still and deep;  
Noisy and swift the small brooks run.  
Among the mullein stalks the sheep  
Go up the hillside in the sun  
Pensively; only you are gone,  
You that alone I cared to keep.

— Edna St. Vincent Millay



# DANDELION



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



# PURPLE TREFOIL, CLOVER GRASS



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

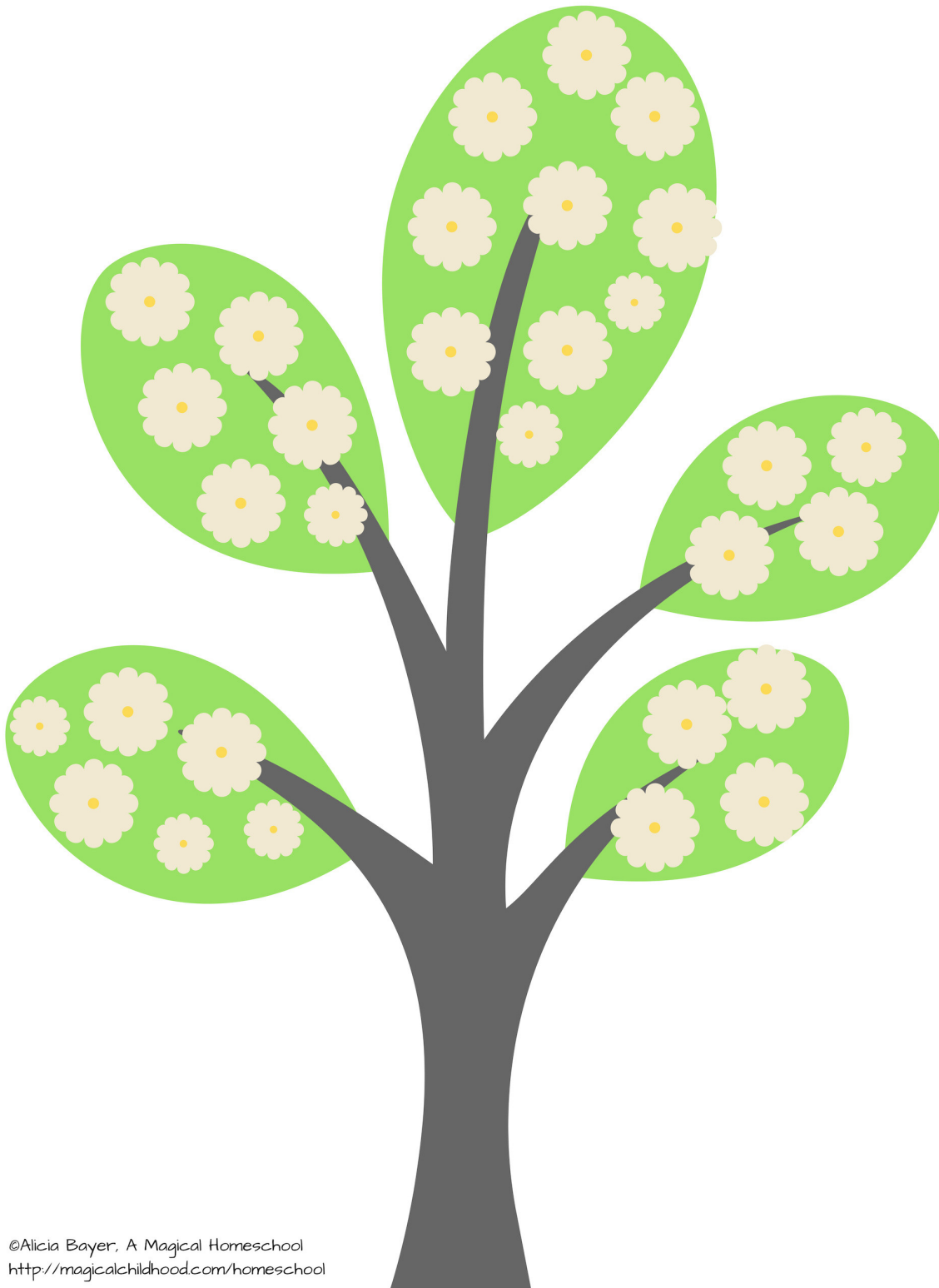
*My Nature Journal*

APRIL



# April 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

# 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

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CLOSE-UP SKETCHES OF PLANT PARTS





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.