

May 2023

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

**Make Color
Changing
Violet Sugar**

**Measure
the Wind**

**Make May
Day Baskets**

**Learn About
Pheasant Back &
Bolete Mushrooms**

**Seasonal poems,
activities, nature
journal pages & more**



From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Happy May!

How are you planning on spending time in nature this month?

This is always a busy time of year for our family! One of our kids has a birthday on April 30, then another the next day on May 1, and then we have one day off and have another child with a birthday on May 3! We also do lots of gardening, foraging, hiking, yard work, walking, bike riding, star gazing, picnicking and generally playing outside as much as possible in May.

Some of our favorite wild foods to forage in May are ramps, nettles, violets, dandelion flowers (for fritters and syrup), morel mushrooms, pheasant back mushrooms and wild asparagus. We also gather herbs like catmint, motherwort and mullein. There might be different wild plants to gather where you are this month but I bet there are lots of choices!

May is often a windy month here in Minnesota. Sometimes we have big storms that blow down branches. This month in Wild Kids we have some fun ways to tell the wind speed. As I type this, it's a very windy day. The tree outside my window is swaying a lot and the wind is making lots of noise. According to my Beaufort scale, it's a force 6 out there today! You can make a wind scale wheel this month too and see how windy it gets where you live.

I hope you find something fun to try this month and that you have a wonderful, wild May!

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.

All materials copyright Alicia Bayer and Wild Kids Magazine.
This publication is free for personal use. Please do not redistribute.
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 May!

10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH



Make mud pies or mud art and decorate them with nature items



Take a picture of one living thing outside every day this month



Make a goal to spend a whole day or afternoon outside



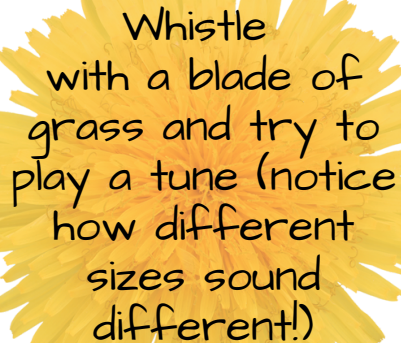
Start a recipe book of recipes you've made with wild & garden plants



Make May Day baskets of fresh flowers (dandelions count!) and leave them on your neighbors' doors



Gather violets & make color changing violet sugar



Whistle with a blade of grass and try to play a tune (notice how different sizes sound different!)



Head someplace away from lights late at night and watch for shooting stars (meteors)



Start a nature table or other display of cool natural items you find



Go for a walk in the rain

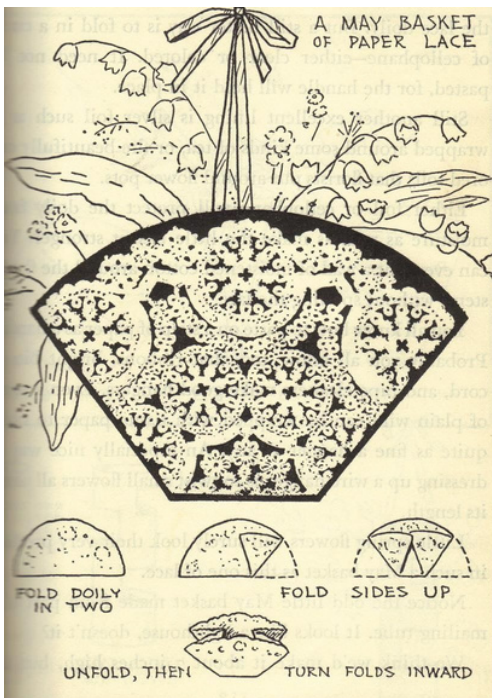


May Day Baskets



In the "olden days," lots of families took part in the tradition of making paper baskets for May Day (May first) and filling them with fresh flowers to leave on their neighbors' front doors. They would hang the baskets on the doorknob and then ring the doorbell and dash away, so their surprised neighbors could find the pretty presents.

This is a lovely way to let elderly neighbors in particular know that you're thinking of them. You can use any flowers that are blooming in your yard right now or just make some pretty paper flowers.



To make the basket, just roll a piece of paper into a cone shape and tape or staple it shut. Attach a paper strip or ribbon for the handle.

You can also use this idea for a vintage basket, or you can just use a paper cup with a ribbon.

Make Color Changing Violet Sugar!



This time of year, you might be lucky enough to find wild violets blooming near you. They grow like weeds in lots of lawns, fields and parks.

Violet leaves and flowers are edible, and very good for you, as long as they haven't been sprayed with pesticides or herbicides. (Note: The houseplants known as African violets are not really violets at all and are not edible.)

When violet flowers bloom, they are so much fun to pick for jellies, syrups and other fun treats.

Here's how to make an easy violet sugar that will change colors if you use it in something with an acid like lemon.

You need one part violet flowers and two parts sugar (so if you gather a half cup of violets, you'd need one cup of sugar).

1. Pick fresh violets, discarding the stem and sepal (green parts).
2. Pulse sugar and petals together in a food processor for just a few seconds until they're mixed, or use a mortar and pestle.
3. Spread your violet sugar evenly over a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Leave it at room temperature in a dry spot for 1-2 days (the higher the humidity in your house, the longer it will take), stirring occasionally. If your house is very damp, you can also dry it in a dehydrator.
4. Once dry, transfer it to an airtight container like a pretty jar.

Use your violet sugar to decorate things like cookies. Add it after baking because the heat will turn your pretty violet sugar brown if you bake it. Or add it to your favorite lemonade recipe and watch it turn pink!



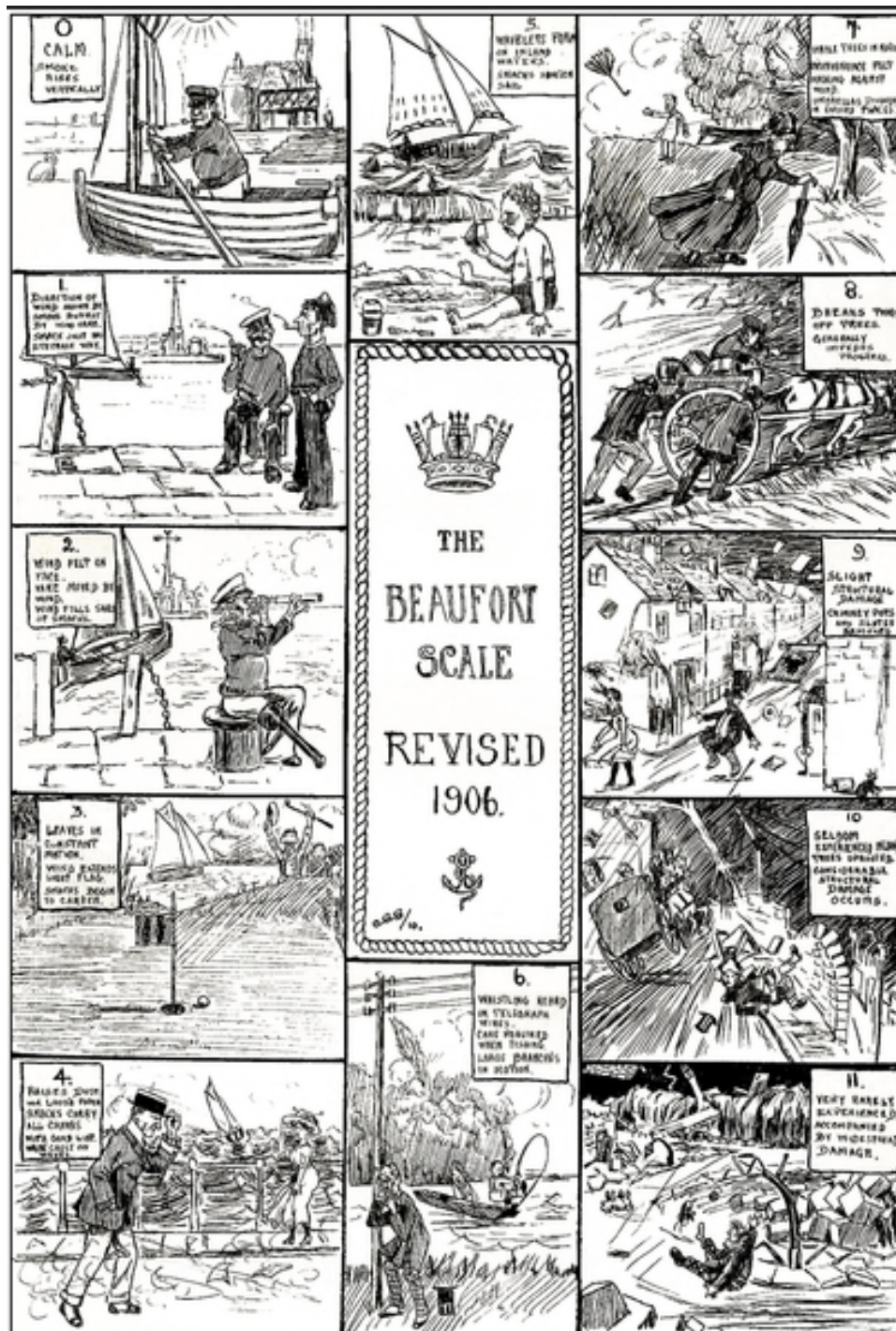
pH Magic!

Violets are great for learning about science because they are pH indicators, meaning things made with violets will change color depending on how acidic or alkaline the liquid is. If you steep violets in boiling water for violet syrup, the liquid will probably be a shade of blue or purple (or even green if your tap water is very alkaline and there's not a lot of color in your violets). Add lemon juice and watch it turn hot pink!



Measuring the wind with the Beaufort Scale

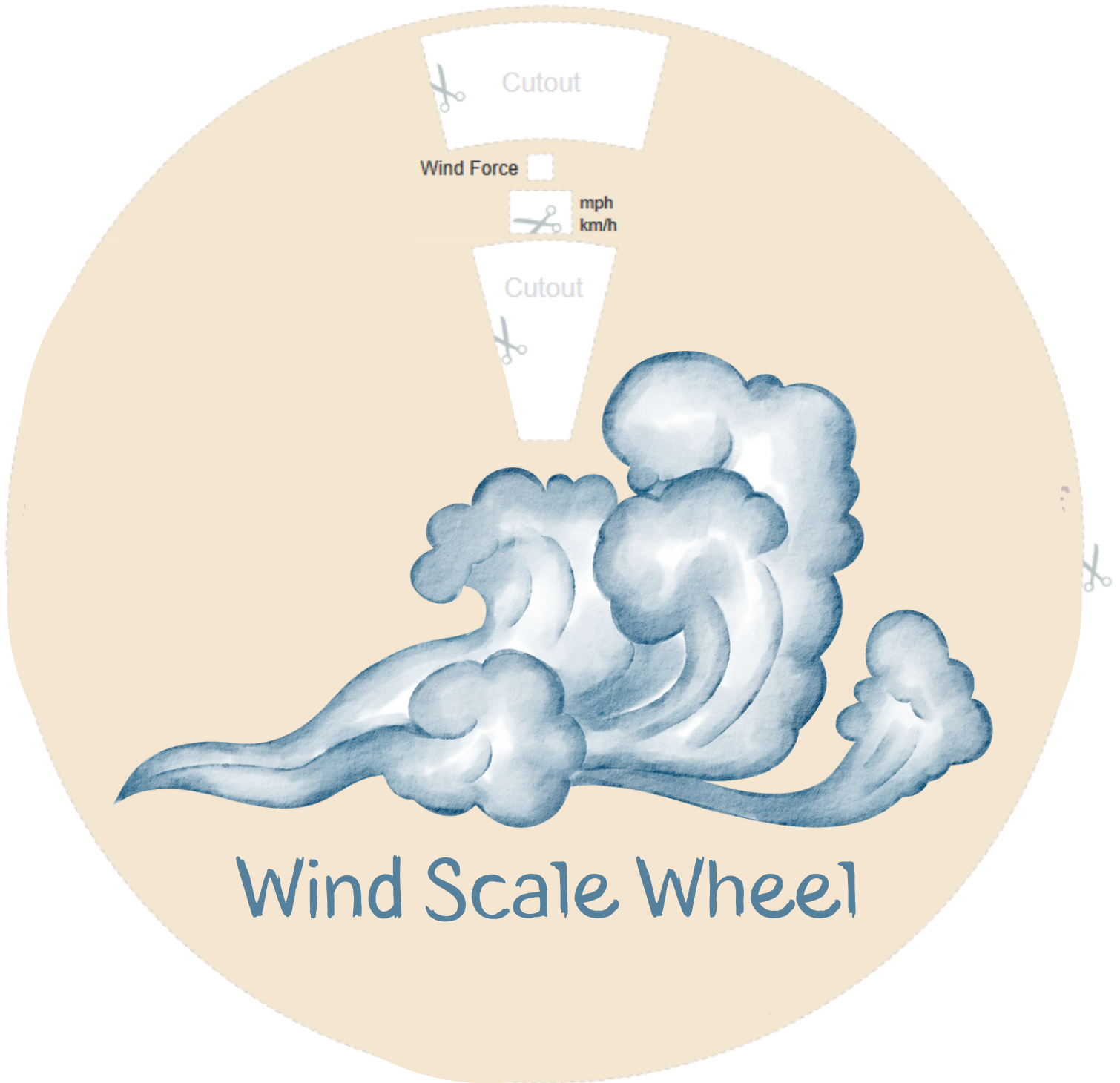
In 1805, a British Naval officer named Francis Beaufort created a scale for everyone to use to describe wind conditions at sea. He came up with 13 wind levels, zero to twelve, ranging from no wind (Force 0) to “winds so strong, no canvas sails could possibly withstand them” (Force 12). In 1906 George Simpson, an explorer and meteorologist, extended the Beaufort Scale from observations at sea to observations on land. We still use those scales today!



Estimate the Beaufort & wind speeds

Beaufort Force	Wind Speed (mph)	Seamen's Term	Effects on Land
Force 0	Under 1	Calm	Calm: smoke rises vertically
Force 1	1-4	Light Air	Smoke drift indicates wind direction; vanes do not move
Force 2	4-7	Light Breeze	Wind felt on face; leave rustle; vanes begin to move
Force 3	8-12	Gentle Breeze	Leaves, small twigs in constant motion; light flags extended
Force 4	13-18	Moderate Breeze	Dust, leaves and loose paper raised up; small branches move.
Force 5	19-24	Fresh Breeze	Small trees begin to sway
Force 6	25-31	Strong Breeze	Large branches of trees in motion; whistling heard in wires
Force 7	32-38	Moderate Gale	Whole trees in motion; resistance felt in walking against the wind
Force 8	39-46	Fresh Gale	Twigs and small branches broken off trees.
Force 9	47-54	Strong Gale	Slight structural damage occurs; slate blown from roofs.
Force 10	55-63	Whole Gale	Trees broken
Force 11	64-72	Storm	Widespread damage
Force 12	73 or higher	Hurricane Force	Violence and Destruction

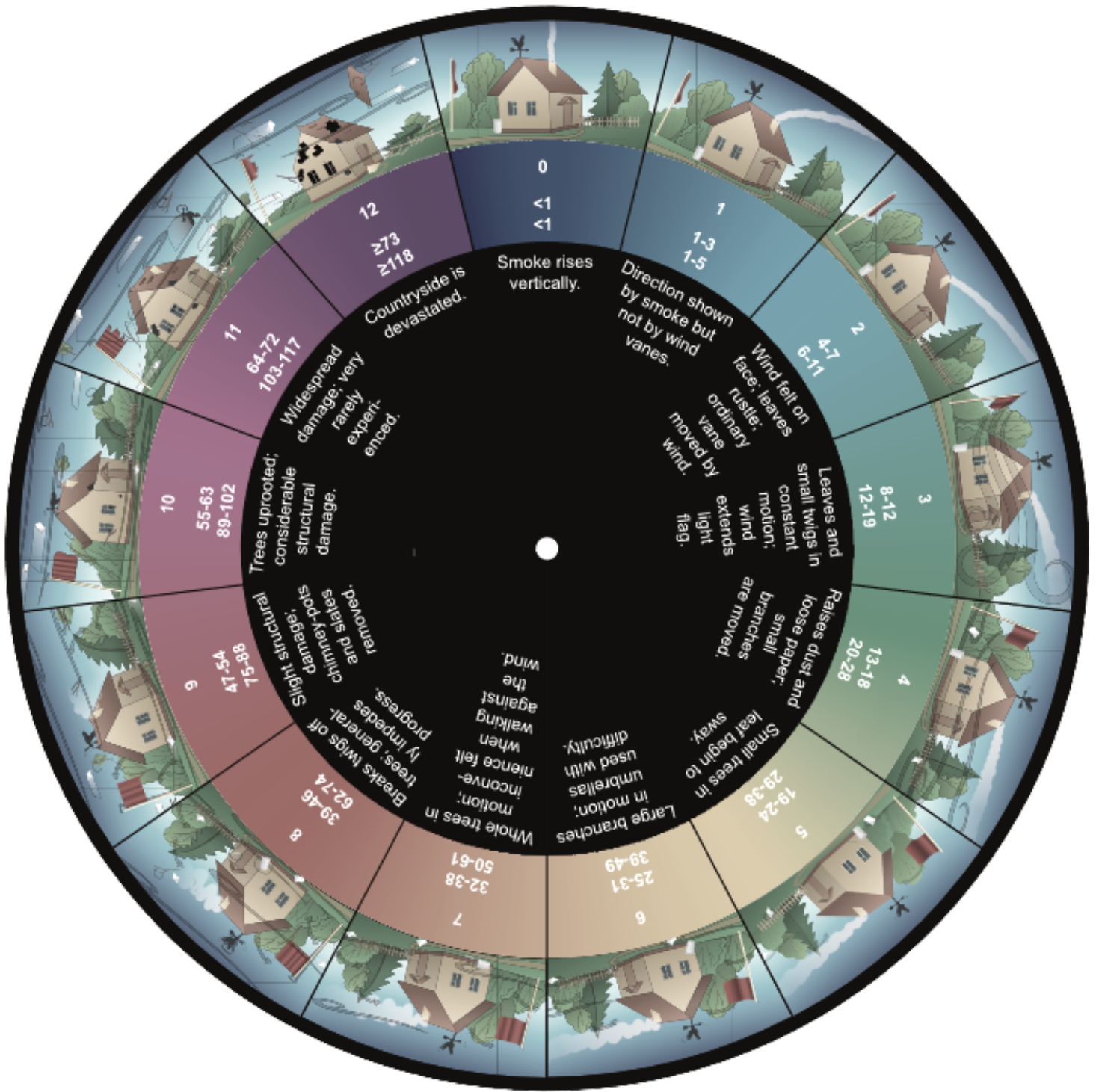




Make your own wind scale wheel!

Just cut out this wheel and the one on the next page (print them on card stock if you want them sturdier). Cut out the windows and attach them with a metal fastener at the center.

Turn the wheel to match the wind you observe outside.



This wheel was adapted from one on a free weather information page from www.weather.gov/jetstream.

A Few Little Mushroom Poems For May

Since we are learning about mushrooms all year in Wild Kids, I thought I'd include a few mushroom poems this month! These are from a poetry book I wrote called "Poems From Under a Toadstool." My daughter Rhiannon did the pictures! ~Alicia

Mycology



They're tiny and slimy and black and beige,
Speckled and freckled and white and gray,
Bumpy and lumpy and thataways.

They're pretty and creepy, sinister, sweet,
Harmless or poisonous, tasty to eat.
They're funny and funky, hard to beat.
I could go on for days.



Whatever their shape, their color, their size,
Every mushroom's a wee little prize
For they're magical gifts that materialize
Right at your grateful feet.

The Fairy's Retirement

Once there was a fairy who lived in the woods
under a mushroom by a wide oak tree.
She did all the things that a fairy should
And she dreamed of a life by the big blue sea



She helped the worms and she helped the spiders.
She helped the flowers and she helped the bees.
She helped her mama and she helped her neighbors.
She lived a good life and then moved to the sea.

8 Things to Do with a Mushroom

Draw it
Dry it
Take it home

Slice it
Study it
Leave it alone

Take a spore print
Make it a poem



Evidence

Anyone who
wants to
believe in
fairies

has only
to see
a row of tiny
mushrooms
on a
rainy forest floor
to know

there would
never be
that many
perfect
happy
umbrellas
if no one was using them.



PORCINI/BOLETE

(Boletus edulis)



Have you seen these mushrooms on your wild adventures? Boletes are delicious mushrooms that are fairly common. Their Italian name--porcini- means little pig! In Europe they're sometimes called penny buns.

Mushroom-appreciation.com says: "King boletes are mycorrhizal; this means they form mutually beneficial relationships with specific trees. The tree and fungus connect underground and share nutrients, resources, and feedback about the environment. Some boletes assist their trees with disease resistance or by reducing environmental stress."

The king bolete only grows on the ground, while other edible boletes grow on trees and wood. They look a bit like buns and they smell a bit like sourdough bread, which is another way to ID them. They like places that are a little bit sunny. Some foragers learn to look for the "mushhumps" or bumps on the ground right before they emerge. They range from yellow brown to a reddish brown color. The caps can grow as large as 30cm (12inch) and weigh up to 1kg (2lb). A 7 pound king bolete was once found in Scotland! The flesh inside is white and stays white after you cut it. They can be found in spring, summer or fall, often a few days after a rain. Its spore print is greenish brown. They have pores instead of gills, so the underside of the cap looks smooth.

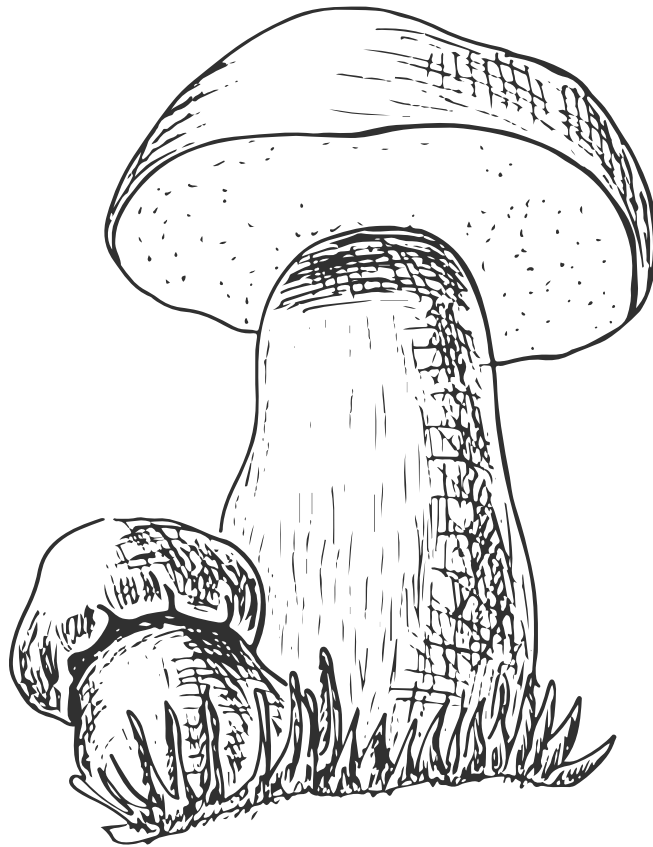
There are some mushrooms that look similar to boletes, but they are edible too. There are no known toxic lookalikes, but the bitter bolete (*Tylopilus felleus*) doesn't taste good (you can tell it from its pink spores and dark brown netting on the stem). Porcini mushrooms grow fast and then go mushy fast, and so many different creatures like them that they disappear fast too!

Remember not to eat wild mushrooms raw and never eat one unless a trusted adult is 100% sure what it is! Otherwise, enjoy it by taking its picture or leave it for wildlife.



PORCINI/ BOLETE

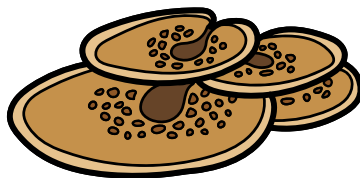
(*Boletus edulis*)



PHEASANT BACK/ DRYAD'S SADDLE

(*Polyporus squamosus*)

By Daryl Hrdlicka



Pheasant back mushrooms are called that because the pattern on the top looks like the feathers on a pheasant's back. Other common names for it are "hawk's wing" or "dryad's saddle" (because they thought fairies could sit on them).

They grow on dead trees, and can be as large as 12" across! They're much more tender when they're young, though. When they're small, before they spread out, they're actually called "pig snouts" because of the shape.

They smell like watermelon rinds, and taste a little like it as well.



They're easy to identify based on the shape, color, and the bottom. They're in the polypore family, so the bottom has lots of tiny holes ("poly" means many, "pore" means holes). If they look like a pheasant's back, smells like watermelon, and has tiny holes instead of gills, congratulations!

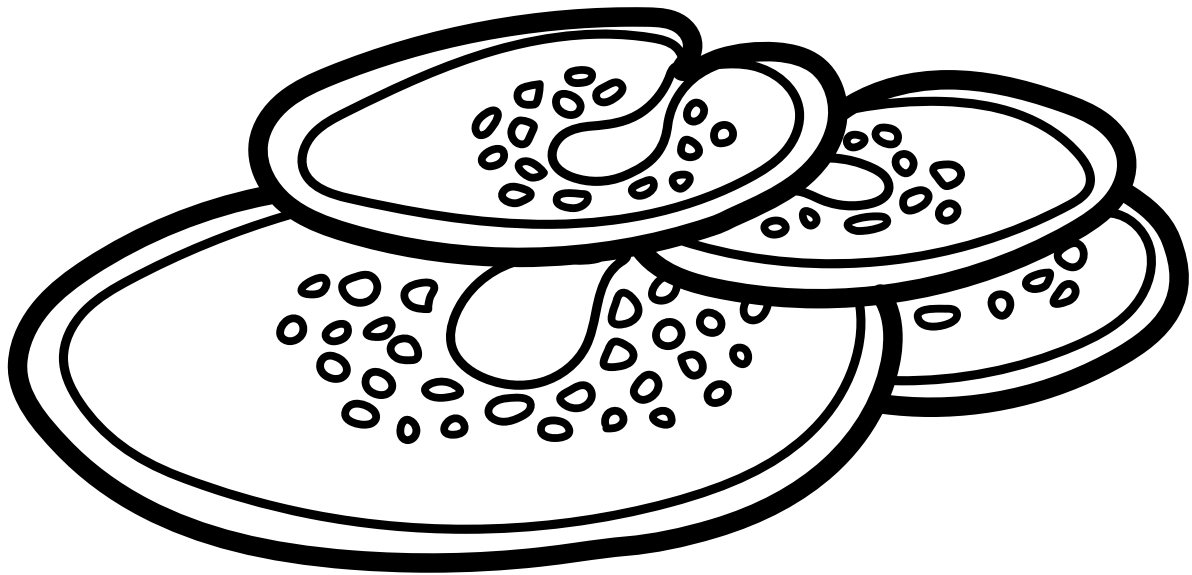
To clean them for eating, you should scrape off the pores with a spoon and try to scrape off the "feathers" on top as well. Cut it into pieces and fry it up (note from Alicia -- we like breading them and frying them like clam strips). Like other mushrooms, this should not be eaten raw. And try a tiny bit before you eat a lot of it to see how your stomach handles it.

If they get to be too old and dried out, we still use them. We clean them and cut them into thin strips, then dehydrate them and grind them into powder. It makes a tasty and nutritious addition to things like soups, breading, veggie burgers, meatballs and drinks.



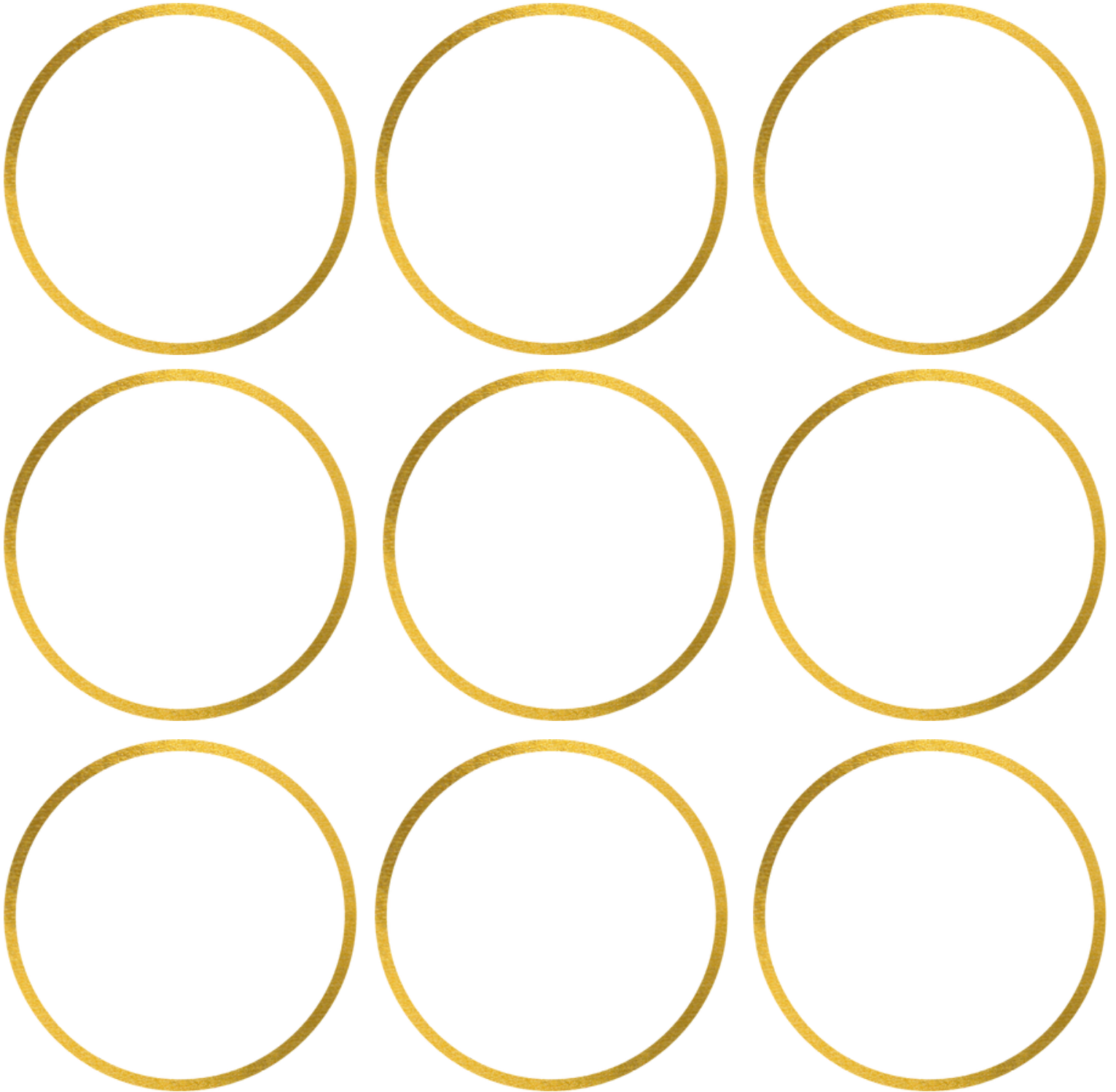
PHEASANT BACK/ DRYAD'S SADDLE

(polyporus squamosus)



This & That for May

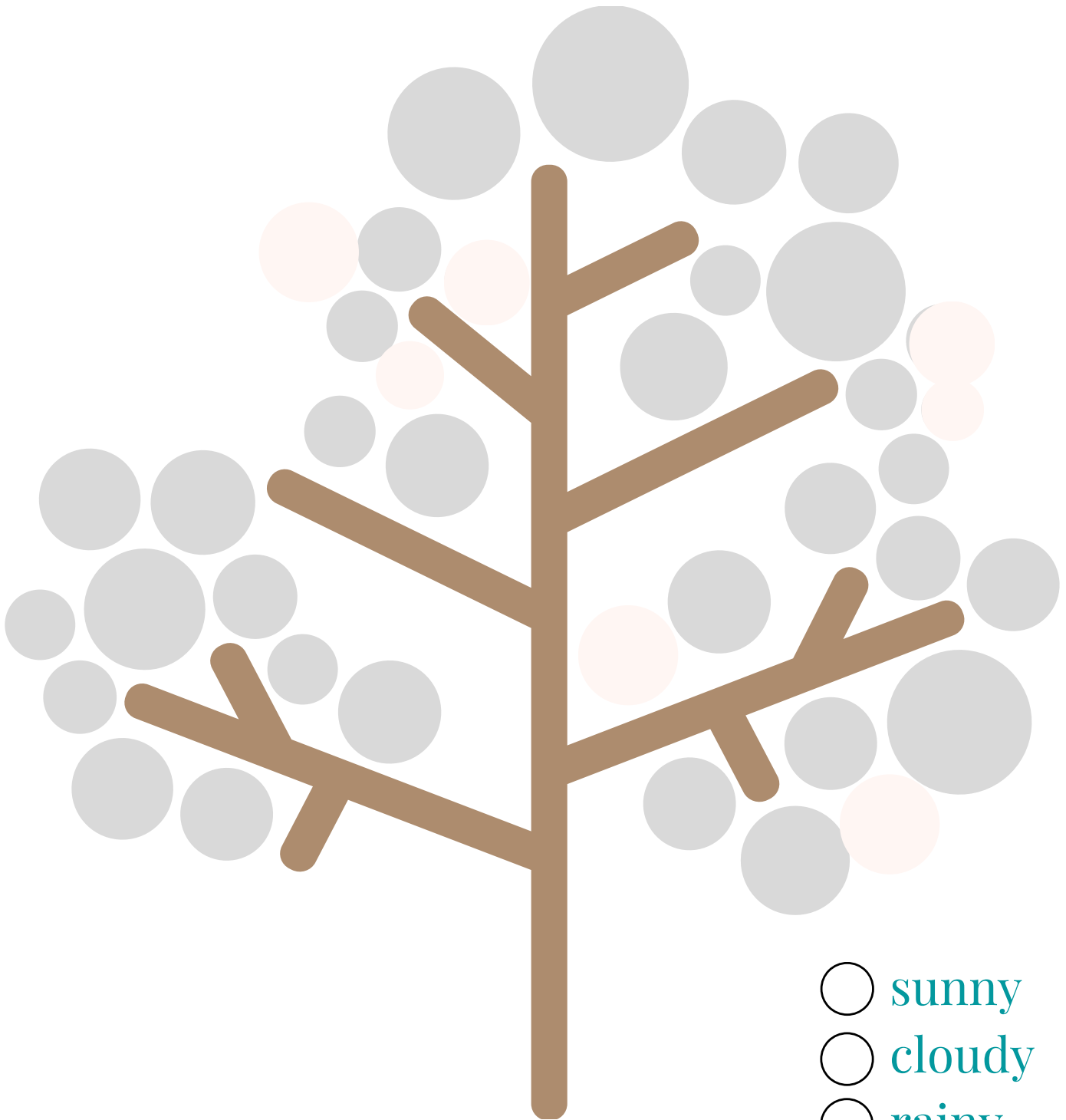
Draw a cool bug you spot, paint a pretty sunset, write a haiku about the weather or just make a note of when the first flowers bloom.



My Nature Journal

MAY

May weather Tree



- sunny
- cloudy
- rainy
- snowy
- stormy

MAY BIRD LIST

Birds spotted this month

MAY ANIMAL LIST

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month

MAY 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.