

October 2023

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

A photograph of three children from behind, walking through a field of tall, golden-brown corn stalks. The child on the left is wearing a blue and black plaid shirt and a brown messenger bag, holding a camera. The child in the middle is wearing a black jacket. The child in the foreground is wearing a grey and orange jacket and a black beanie. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

**Printable Old Man
(of the woods)
Game Cards**

**October Nature
Collection Challenge**

**Make Shrunken
Apple Heads**

**Learn About Giant
Puffball and Fishy
Milkcap Mushrooms**

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

From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Happy October!

Boy, the days are suddenly flying past fast, aren't they?

What are you hoping to do in nature this month?

October is usually a pretty busy year for our family here in Minnesota. We do a lot of late season foraging (especially of wild mushrooms) and are usually busy "putting things up" (that's another way of saying canning, freezing and otherwise preserving foods), and doing things like making tinctures and syrups from our dried, foraged goodies.

I do kind of like the way nature gives us seasons not just in the big sense like fall and winter, but in another way like apple picking season, seed planting season, and cozy up inside season (coming soon for many of us!).

You might notice that for those of us in the Northern Hemisphere, the days are getting much shorter and it's getting dark much earlier. See what time the sun sets today and then make a note to see what time it sets on the last day of this month, October 31st (Halloween for those who celebrate it). Do you think there will be a big difference?

I hope you have lots of wild adventures this month and enjoy October!

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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Go Wild in October

10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

Look for wild grapevines or other vines to weave into a wreath for your wall or door

Play Old Man of the Woods (find the cards in this issue)

Find cattail and milkweed seeds to "explode" and scatter in the wind

Make a leaf crown with construction paper and fall leaves

Collect flower seeds to plant next year

Get some paint sample cards and go out in nature to see how many colors you can match

Play autumn BINGO (we have one in this issue)

Lie on your back outside and watch the clouds -- what shapes do you see?

Look for wild mushrooms -- How many can you ID?

Take part in our month-long nature item collection challenge

Play Old Man (of the Woods)



Have you ever played the card game Old Maid? Here's a fun variation -- Old Man (of the woods)!

To play: Print out two copies of the following pages of wild mushroom cards. You can either print them out on paper and use a glue stick to glue them to old playing cards, or you can print them out on card stock and cut them out. If you want them to last a long time, you can also laminate them.



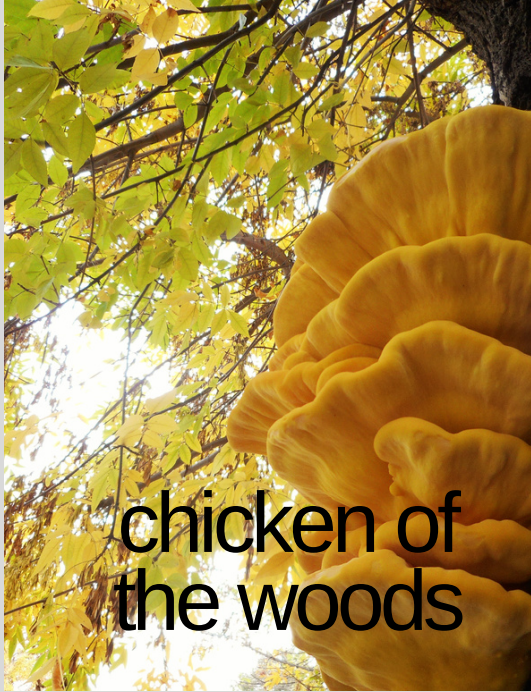
Now remove just one of the Old Man of the Woods cards. That leaves the Old Man that you don't want to get stuck with at the end!

Shuffle the cards and deal them to all the players (2 to 4 people). It doesn't matter if everyone gets the same number. Don't let anyone see your cards!

If you have any matching cards, lay them down. Now take turns taking one card from someone else's hand (without being able to see what their cards are). If you get a match, put those cards down. Try to get rid of all of your cards and not be the last person with the Old Man!



lion's mane



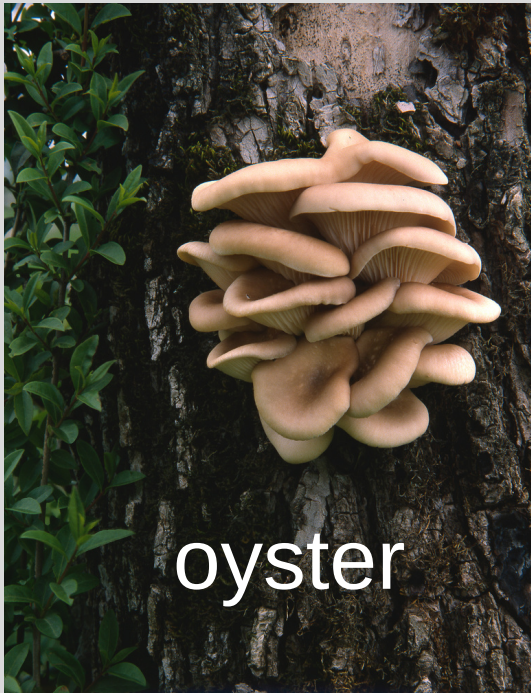
chicken of the woods



puffball



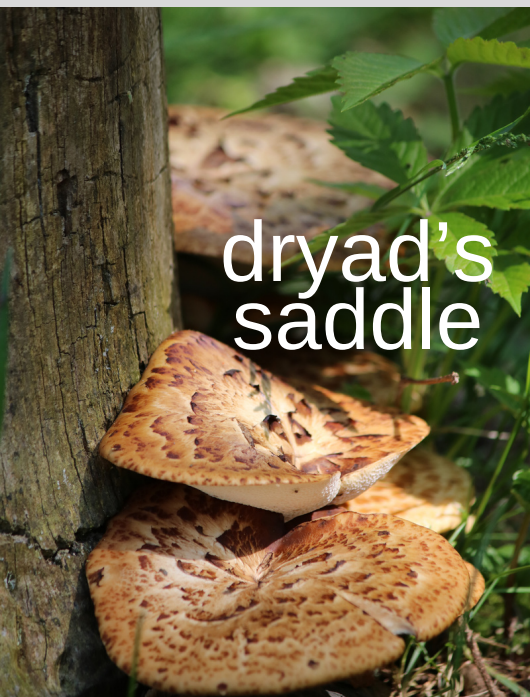
morel



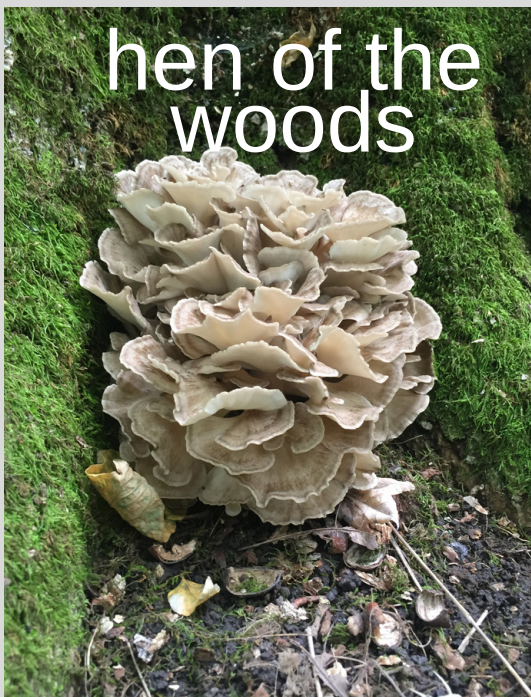
oyster



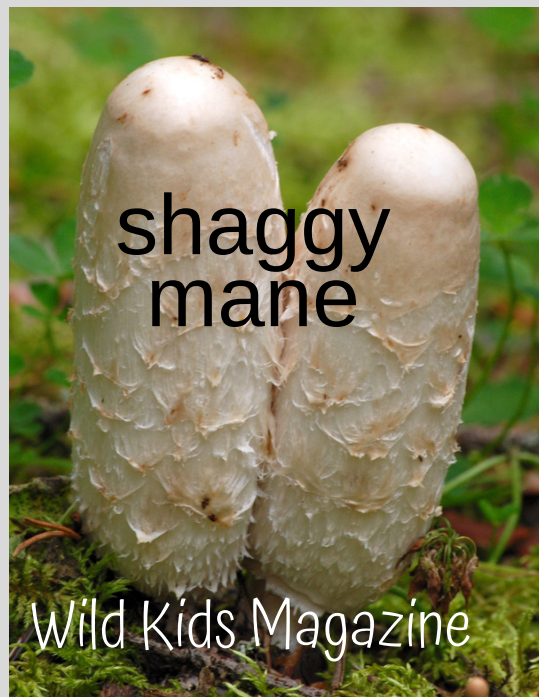
artist conch



dryad's saddle



hen of the woods



shaggy mane



corn smut



indigo
milkcap



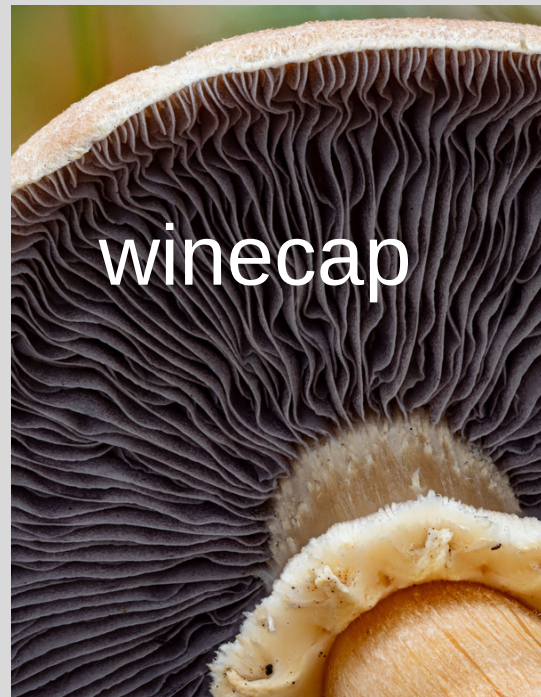
hedgehog



fishy milkcap



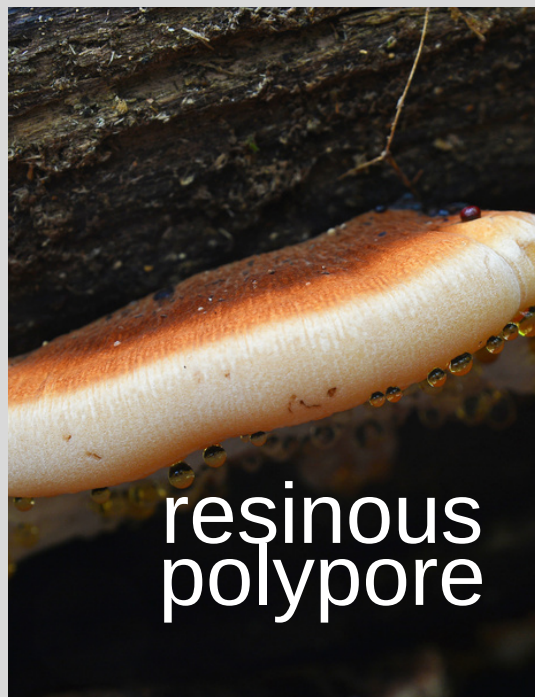
witch's
butter



winecap



turkey
tail



resinous
polypore



chestnut



OLD MAN



coral



lobster



black trumpet



beefsteak



chanterelle



bolete



enoki



wood ear

Shrunken Apple Heads!

(First seen in the October 2019 issue of Wild Kids)



Here's a fun little nature craft for this time of year!

All you need are some apples (we used imperfect ones off a generous neighbor's tree), salt and lemon juice.

First peel your apples. You can leave a little on the top and bottom like a little hat and scarf.

Then get some carving tools (a chopstick, grapefruit spoon or pen knife all work well, depending on skill level). You can trace your design first with a pen or pencil, if you like.

Carve out a face, making sure to make each feature large since they will shrink up and collapse somewhat.

Then mix up some salt and lemon juice and apply it all over, especially in the parts you've carved out. This will prevent mold and also protect them from getting too brown. Salt has been used for thousands of years to preserve foods and other things. Acids like lemon juice slow oxidation (browning caused by a chemical reaction when substances react with oxygen).

Now put your apple heads somewhere to dry. Choose a location where you can watch them and keep up with how they change.

Have fun!



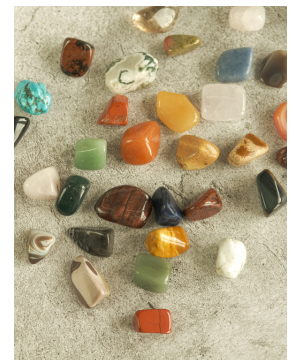
October

Here's a new challenge for this month! 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 | 11 | Red | 21 | Leaf |
| 2 | Tiny | 12 | Round | 22 | Hole |
| 3 | Symmetrical | 13 | Colorful | 23 | Changed |
| 4 | Shiny | 14 | Black | 24 | Weird |
| 5 | Insect | 15 | Thin | 25 | Fuzzy |
| 6 | Cracked | 16 | Sharp | 26 | Fragile |
| 7 | Pattern | 17 | Green | 27 | White |
| 8 | Flower | 18 | Nut | 28 | Edible |
| 9 | Feather | 19 | Dried | 29 | Rough |
| 10 | Seed | 20 | Asymmetrical | 30 | Pretty |
| | | | | 31 | Spooky |



Giant Puffball Mushrooms

By Daryl Hrdlicka

If you've ever been walking through the woods in fall and found what looked like volleyballs on the ground, congratulations - you've found giant puffballs (*Calvatia gigantea*)!

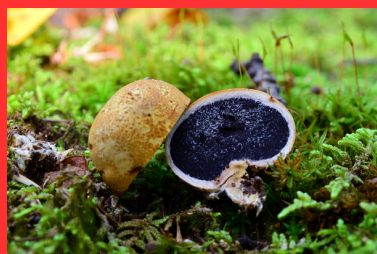
They're found in fields and deciduous forests all over the world, and can grow up to 20" in diameter. Their spore print is olive brown.

They don't have much flavor on their own (some people say they're like tofu or melted cheese when cooked), but a common way to use them is to cut them into 1/2" slices and use them as pizza crusts!

To see if they're still edible, cut them open. Younger ones will be firm and pure white inside. If they're greenish brown inside and squishy, they're too old for eating.

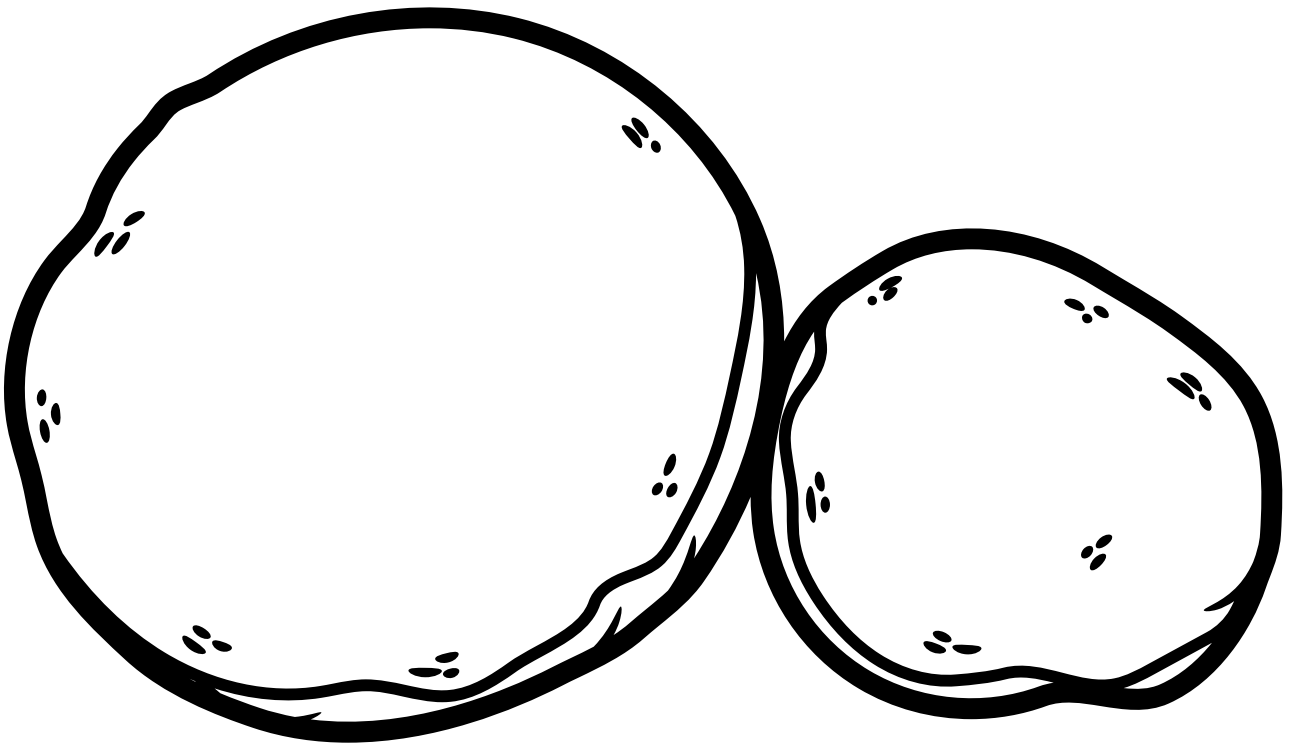


A similar looking mushroom, the earthball (*Scleroderma citrinum*) is brown outside and black inside. It is poisonous, so avoid this one!



GIANT PUFFBALL MUSHROOM

(Calvatia gigantea)



Fishy Milkcap Mushroom

By Daryl Hrdlicka

The fishy milkcap (*Lactifluus volemus*) grows on the floor of moist hardwood forests in Europe, North America, and Asia.

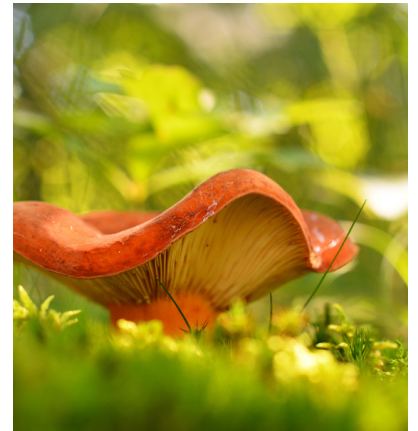


It gets its common name from the fact that when the gills are damaged they produce a milky "sap", and because it smells and tastes like fish! The smell gets stronger when it dries. The fishy taste mostly goes away when cooked.

It is also commonly called Weeping Milkcap.

The sap can stain things, so be careful.

The cap can be up to 4 1/2" across, and the color ranges from apricot to tan. The gills are pale yellow. It makes a white spore print.



There is a bitter lookalike, so if you see a patch, have a knowledgeable adult take a small nibble from one. If it's bitter, leave that patch alone.

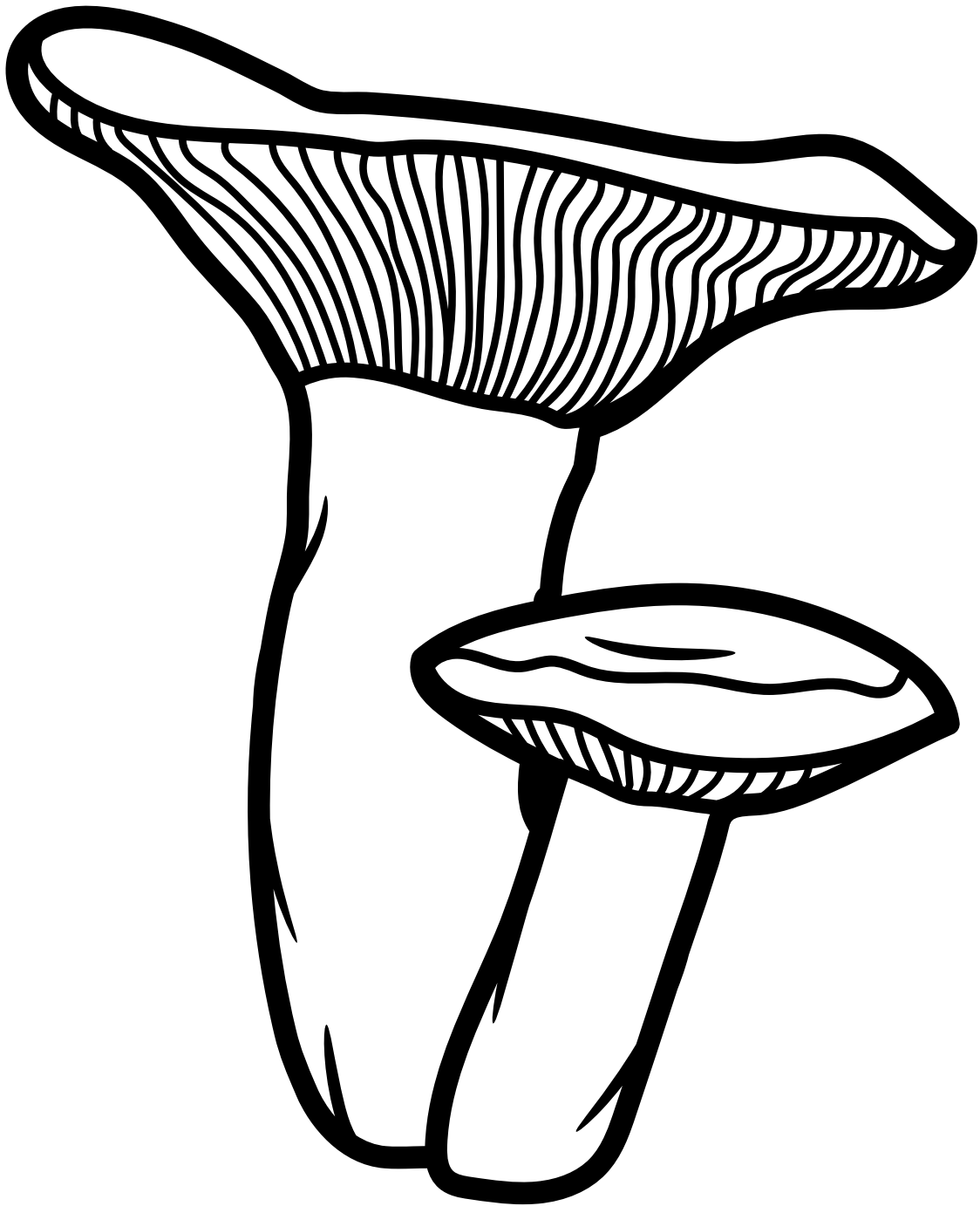
There are no dangerous lookalikes -- just ones that taste bad. Real fishy milkcaps taste good and are very popular with foragers.



To cook with them, slice them and saute them. The taste will come through no matter what sauces you use.



FISHY MILKCAP MUSHROOM
(*Fistulina hepatica*)



October Poetry

The morns are meeker than they were
By Emily Dickinson

The morns are meeker than they were -
The nuts are getting brown -
The berry's cheek is plumper -
The rose is out of town.

The maple wears a gayer scarf -
The field a scarlet gown -
Lest I sh'd be old-fashioned
I'll put a trinket on.



The Road Not Taken
By Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Fall, leaves, fall
By Emily Brontë

Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.
I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow;
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.



Theme in Yellow
By Carl Sandburg

**I spot the hills
With yellow balls in autumn.
I light the prairie cornfields
Orange and tawny gold clusters
And I am called pumpkins.
On the last of October
When dusk is fallen
Children join hands
And circle round me
Singing ghost songs
And love to the harvest moon;
I am a jack-o'-lantern
With terrible teeth
And the children know
I am fooling.**

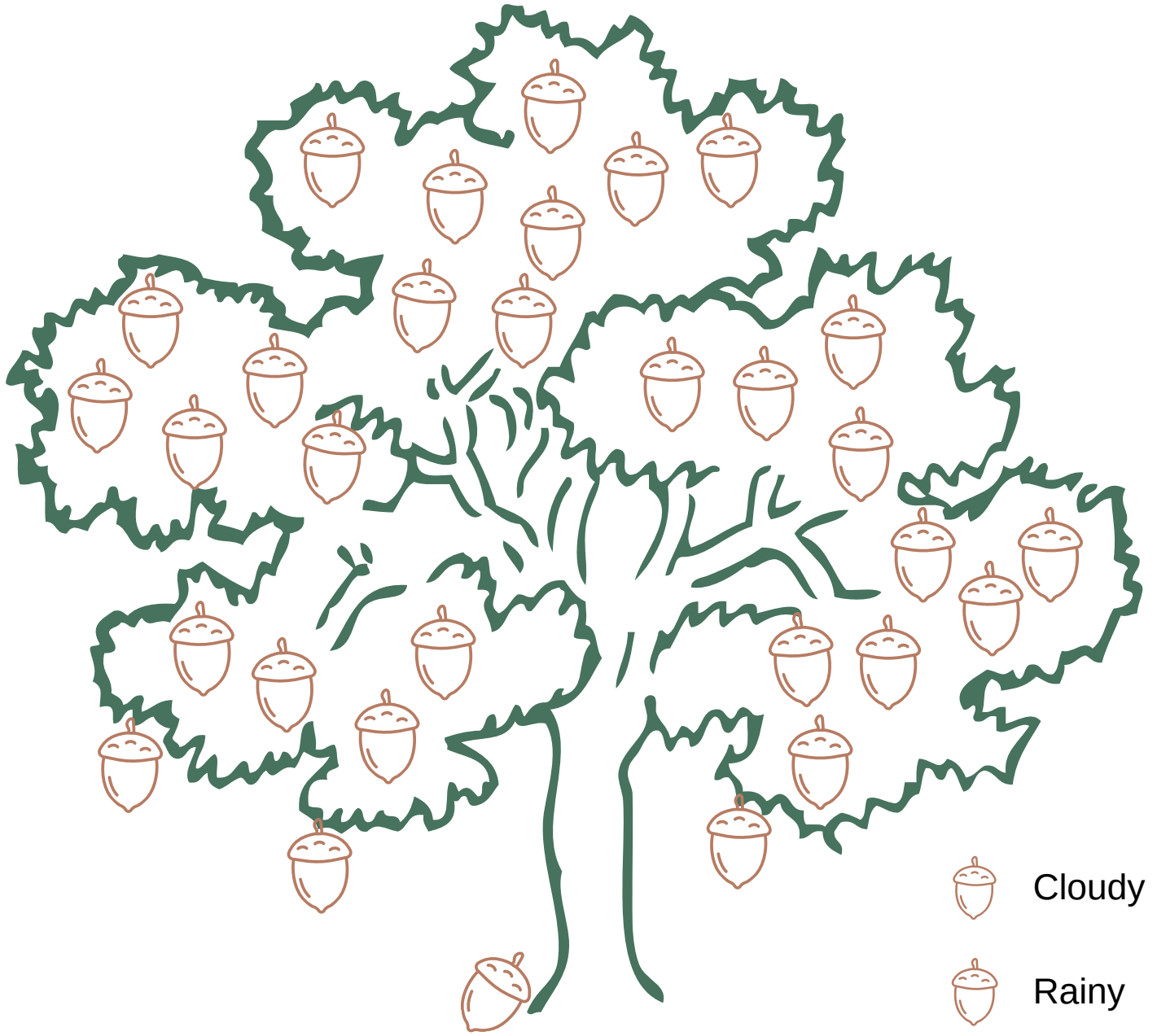



My Nature Journal

October



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:

GENERAL SKETCH OF THE PLANT

CLOSE-UP SKETCHES OF PLANT PARTS

LATIN NAME _____

WHERE FOUND _____

PARTS USED _____

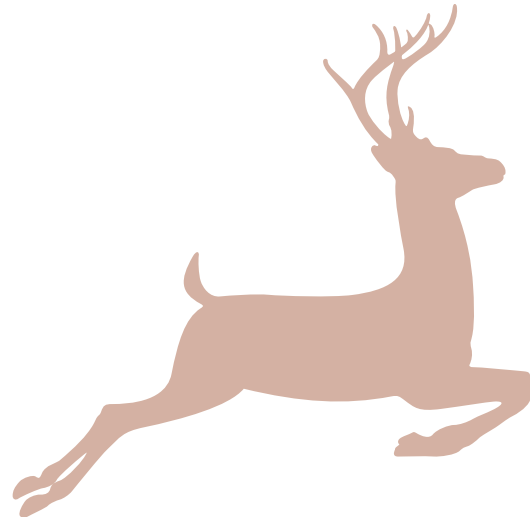
LOOKALIKES & HOW TO POSITIVELY ID:

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.