

April 2024

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

Latin &
Common Wild
Plant Name
Concentration
Game Cards

April
Photo
Challenges

April
Phenology
Calendar

ID
Frogs by
their
Songs

What
to do with
Invasive
Bradford Pears
& English Ivy

Make
Your Own
Green Frog
Caller!

Seasonal poems,
activities, nature
journal pages & more

From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Hello April!

What is the weather like where you live right now?
What are you hoping to do outside this month?

Here in Minnesota, we are starting seeds for our garden and doing some early spring foraging. There is still some snow on the ground from some late snowstorms we had in March. We had spring weather in the winter this year, and then we had winter weather in the spring. We never know what weather to expect in spring here, and just prepare for all of it.

We went on a little family vacation recently to rural Arkansas with our three youngest children. It was fun to show our family the Ozark mountains and a part of the country I lived in when I was a child, and to see it all again as an adult. It was also interesting to see all the great wild plants that were all around for foraging, lots of times right in people's front yards.

We also saw lots and lots of flowering Bradford (callery) pear trees! They looked very pretty but they are invasive trees that have taken over a lot of the wild spaces all around and crowded out all the other plants. As you know, this year we're focusing on invasive species all year and ways to use them while also keeping them in check. This month in Wild Kids we have ways to use Bradford pear trees and English ivy.

What are you hoping to do in nature this month? I hope you have a wild, wonderful 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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Contact: aliciabayer@gmail.com

Find lots more links, information and fun to accompany this month's themes at www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids.

Go Wild in April!

10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

Play
Latin & common
name concentration
(we have game
cards in this issue)

Experiment
with ways of
making realistic
frog sounds (we
have some in this
issue!)

Try using
very soft rocks
for chalk & see if
you can find a
variety of
natural colors

Go for a
walk in the rain
or afterwards and
splash in every
puddle you can
find

If you're in
North America,
safely watch the
total or partial solar
eclipse on April 8.
Be sure to use
proper eye
protection!

Pull some
English Ivy
vines and weave
a crown or
wreath

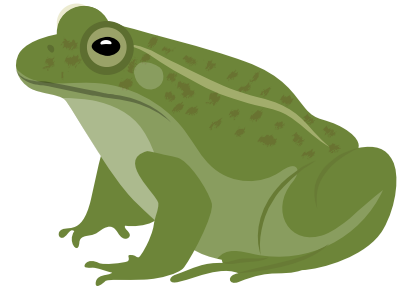
Use our
April photo
challenge to take
a different nature
photo each
day

Find some
sweet crumbs & grains
of sugar & sprinkle
three different kinds
near someplace
outside where you see
ants, then sit and
watch which ones
they like best

Find out
about 10 plants
that are native
where you live
and choose your
favorite

Try to get
outside barefoot
every day this
month, even for
just a minute

What do different frogs sound like?



By Daryl Hrdlicka

Recently we took a short vacation to the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas, and while we were there we visited Crowley's Ridge State Park. They did a presentation on the frogs in the park and the sounds they made, and I'd love to share them with you!

The park interpreter showed us laminated cards of the different frogs and toads, and then played a recording of the noise. For a lot of them, she also had a way for us to make our own frog sounds. For sound effects, you can go to the page at www.leaps.ms/soundpage.htm. This is for Tennessee, but has them all. See which ones you recognize, and see if you can figure out how to make your own frog sounds!

First up was the **Spring Peeper** (*Pseudacris crucifer*). We also have them in Minnesota, so I'm used to it. It sounds a little like the chirping noise your smoke alarm makes when the battery is dying.



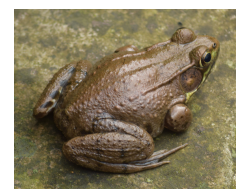
Next up was the **Cricket Frog** (*Acris crepitans*). This was a new one for me. It sounds like two small rocks being clicked together, and that's how she had us make the sound.



Third was the **Cajun Chorus Frog** (*Pseudacris fouquettei*). This sounded very similar to our Northern Chorus Frogs. We replicated the sound by dragging a comb over a poker chip.



Fourth was the **American Bullfrog** (*Lithobates catesbeianus*). I haven't seen them this far north. It's a very deep "jug-o-rum" noise, which we made by blowing over the top of an empty two-liter soda bottle.



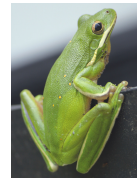
Next was the **Green Frog** (*Lithobates clamitans*), which is in Minnesota but I've never heard them. I've heard their call described as plucking a banjo string, but we made the sound with a plastic bottle and rubber band. We'll even show you how to make one!



Then we came to the **Fowler's toad** (*Anaxyrus fowleri*). We don't have them in Minnesota, which is good because I'd just laugh every time I heard them. It sounds like an angry sheep to me.



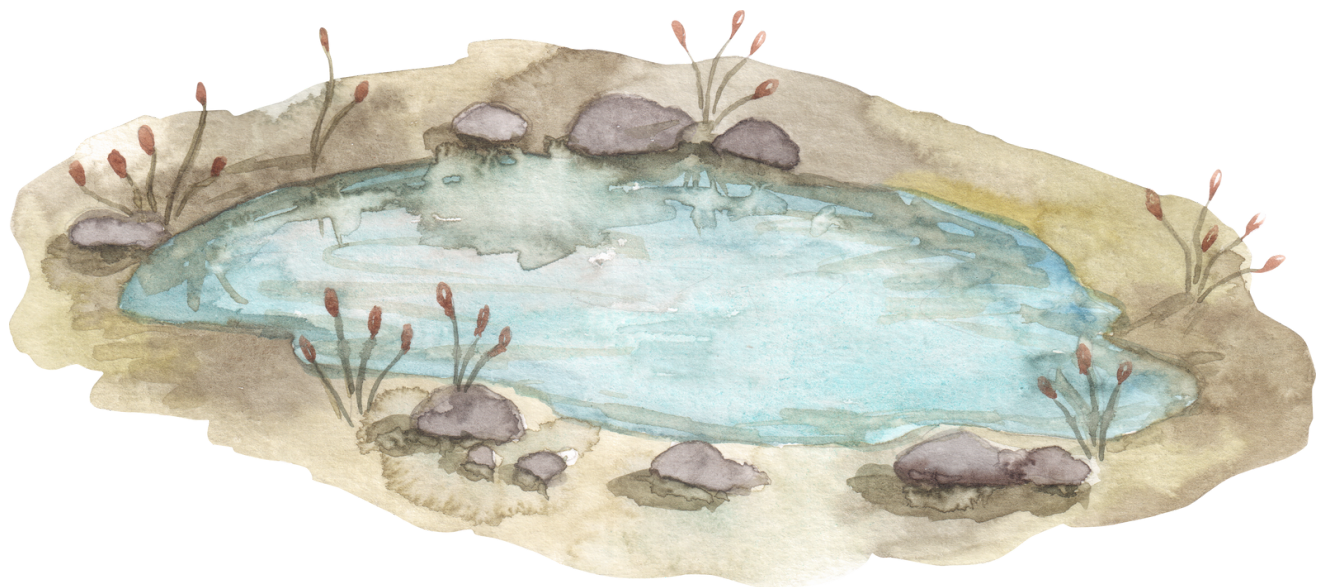
Then we learned about the **Green Tree Frog** (*Hyla cinerea*), which I believe are in our area. They make a noise that's somewhere between a goose and a duck.



And last was the **Crawfish Frog** (*Lithobates areolatus*), named that because they live in crawfish holes. They look like Leopard Frogs, but sound like they're snoring. Very interesting.



It was a very interesting presentation, and I learned a lot! I'm so glad I got to take part in it.



Make a Green Frog Caller!

How to make your own "green frog" call!

By Daryl Hrdlicka

Materials: 1 empty plastic bottle, 1 wide rubber band

Tools: Scissors, Pencil, Drill

First, have an adult cut the bottle in two, about 3 inches from the bottom. Cut the rubber band as well.



Tie a knot in the rubber band close to one end. You may have to tie it twice.



Have an adult drill a hole in the bottom of the bottle.

Using the pencil, push the non-knotted end of the rubber band through the hole and pull it all the way through.



Congratulations! You have a "green frog" call!

To use it, have a friend hold the bottom of the bottle and pull the rubber band tight. Use your finger to pluck it. That's it!

If you listen to the recording on the frog sound page, you can hear how well it works!

Let's learn some Latin & common names for wild edible & medicinal plants with concentration!



Print out the cards on the following pages (use card stock if you want them to be more durable) and cut them out.

Turn all the cards face-down and take turns turning up two at a time and trying to make a match. If you make a match, you get to go again.

It's okay if you can't pronounce their names!

Some of them are long and complicated. But it will help you remember it when you see it another time, and you'll see things like blackberries and raspberries are both in the rubus genus, meaning they are closely related.

You can also play with just one player!
Just see how quickly you can find all the matches.

One of each set of cards has the Latin name for the plant on it, and the other one has its common name.

Remember that sometimes people have all different common names for a plant (especially people who live in different regions) but a plant will only have one Latin name.



LATIN & COMMON NAME FORAGING MEMORY CARDS

Match the wild edible & medicinal plants by their common & Latin names!



BLACKBERRY



**BLACK
RASPBERRY**



RASPBERRY



**HIGHBUSH
BLUEBERRIES**



*Vaccinium
corymbosum*



CHICKWEED



DANDELION



ELDERBERRY



*Taraxacum
officinale*



*Sambucus
canadensis*



GOOSEBERRY



*Rubus
allegheniensis*



*Rubus
occidentalis*



*Ribes
uva-crispa*



Rubus idaeus



Stellaria media

LATIN & COMMON NAME FORAGING MEMORY CARDS

Match the wild edible & medicinal plants by their common & Latin names!



**BLACK
CURRANT**



**LEMON
BALM**



NETTLES



**PURPLE
DEADNETTLE**



HENBIT



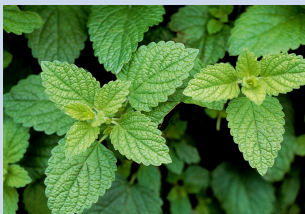
*Lamium
purpureum*



PURSLANE



ROSE



*Melissa
officinalis*



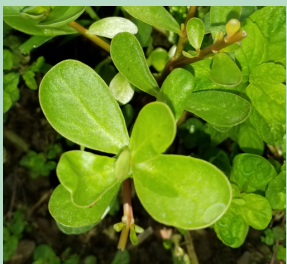
Rosa rugosa



VIOLETS



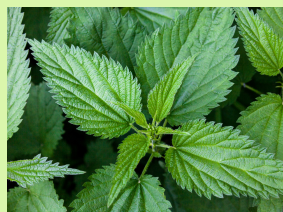
*Lamium
amplexicaule*



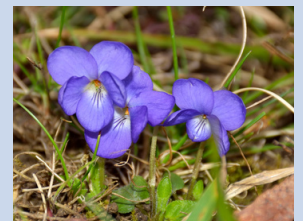
*Portulaca
oleracea*



Ribes nigrum



Urtica dioica



Viola

WHAT TO DO WITH BRADFORD PEAR TREES

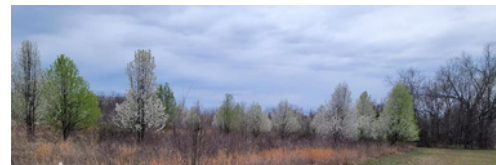
(*Pyrus calleryana*)



In a lot of places, Bradford pear trees are causing a lot of trouble!

People have planted them in a lot of yards and in front of a lot of businesses because they look pretty in the spring. What they didn't realize when they planted them is that they quickly spread to wild areas nearby and take over, crowding out the native wildflowers, plants and trees. They also are poisonous to some animals, break easily, and can develop really long thorns that are so big and sharp they can pop tires! They also spread to farmland where they are a risk to farm animals and equipment, and they smell terrible! People have compared their smell to vomit or baby poop!

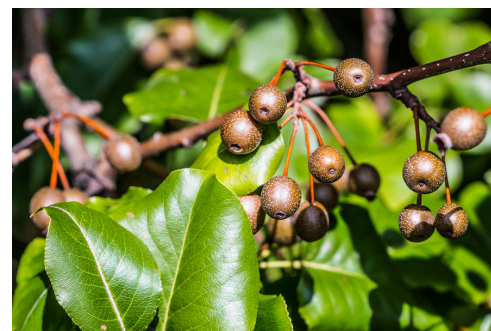
In some places, states will even pay for new trees for you to plant if you cut down your Bradford pear trees, and some states have banned stores from selling them because they do so much damage.



One way you can help is to talk about how much trouble these trees cause. Encourage grown ups to cut them down and replace them with native trees that will help nature instead. But where we have them, we can use them too.

The Appalachian Free press says that if we used the wood, flowers and fruits of the Bradford pear the way people have in the past they wouldn't have become so invasive in the first place.

Aimee LaFon says, "The edible fruits of the Bradford pear will come later in the season, just after the first frost. Like rosehips, these fruits are bitter, sour, and sweet. To me, they taste a bit like crab apples or sour candy. These fruits also have similar health benefits to rosehips, as they contain a fair amount of vitamin C, antioxidants, and minerals like zinc."



The fruits can be eaten raw or used in pastries, breads, jams, jellies and smoothies. Use them the same way you would use other sour fruits like cranberries. (Remember to always try just a little of any new food in case you have an allergy, and always avoid wild foods if you don't know for sure what they are and that they haven't been sprayed with anything.)

The wood of Bradford pears can also be used for woodworking projects. These trees break all the time, and if you see fallen limbs you can gather them and use them for woodworking. The Art of Woodworking says the wood is "stunning" with warm colors and beautiful grain patterns. They say it's easy to work with and is well suited for carving, and it has natural resistance to rot and decay so it's good for outdoor projects. It can split and crack easily, though. It's great for small pieces like bowls and jewelry boxes, and also outdoor pieces like garden decorations.



BRADFORD PEAR

(*Pyrus calleryana*)

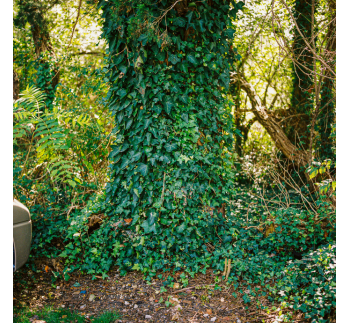


WHAT TO DO WITH ENGLISH IVY

(Hedera helix)

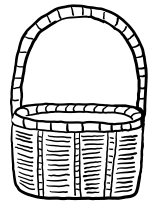


English ivy is an invasive plants in many parts of the United States because after people plant it in their yards it spreads to nearby places and climbs up trees and houses.



English ivy sounds like poison ivy but they are very different plants! Even so, some people with sensitive skin can get a rash from the sap.

While it can crowd out other plants and can even kill trees, it has some great uses. Some people cut the vines and make baskets from them. Others use the vines to makes wreaths and other crafts.

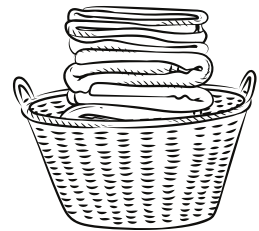


Some people pot up English ivy and keep it as a plant inside, where it does a really good job of cleaning pollutants from indoor air.

Some people also use the leaves to make homemade laundry soap! That's because it has something called saponins in it, which naturally foam up and help remove grease and dirt. If you want to try it yourself, here's how to do it.

English Ivy Laundry Detergent

1. Put on gloves and gather about 50 English ivy leaves.
2. Put the leaves in a pan and add 4 cups of water.
3. Bring to a boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Remove from heat.
4. Let the ivy mixture cool for about 12 hours.
5. Wearing gloves, squeeze all the leaves into the water. Compost the leaves.
6. Pour the ivy water through an old t-shirt or cheesecloth to filter it, and put it in a jar.



To wash clothes: For each load of laundry, add 3/4 cup of ivy detergent.

This detergent won't keep a long time. Keep it in your fridge to store it. You can add a splash of vinegar to make it last a little longer.

ENGLISH IVY

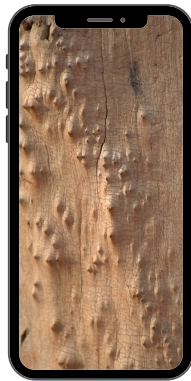
(*Hedera helix*)



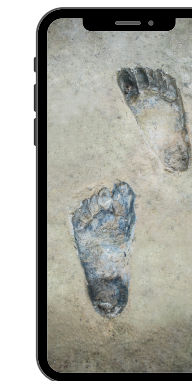
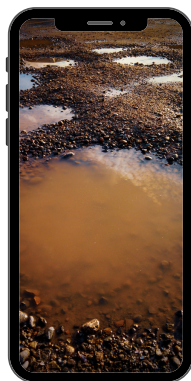
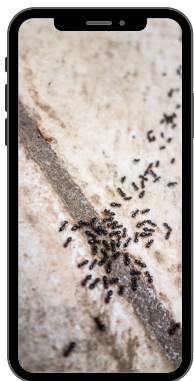
APRIL

Nature Photo Challenge

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



- | | | | | | |
|----|----------|----|---------------|----|------------|
| 1 | Dried | 11 | Insect | 21 | Silhouette |
| 2 | Sky | 12 | Shiny | 22 | Edible |
| 3 | Wet | 13 | Blue | 23 | Legs |
| 4 | Feather | 14 | Impression | 24 | Up |
| 5 | Flower | 15 | Bumpy | 25 | Shadow |
| 6 | Dirty | 16 | Pattern | 26 | Many |
| 7 | Colorful | 17 | Web | 27 | Delicate |
| 8 | Wild | 18 | Tiny | 28 | Dark |
| 9 | Pink | 19 | Black & White | 29 | Spike |
| 10 | Fluffy | 20 | Symmetrical | 30 | Old |



April Poetry

**"April comes like an idiot, babbling and stewing flowers."
- Edna St. Vincent Millay**

If All Were Rain And Never Sun
by Christina Rossetti

If all were rain and never sun,
No bow could span the hill;
If all were sun and never rain,
There'd be no rainbow still.



Rain on the Roof
by Coates Kinney

When the humid shadows hover
Over all the starry spheres,
And the melancholy darkness
Gently weeps in rainy tears,
What a joy to press the pillow
Of a cottage-chamber bed,
And to listen to the patter
Of the soft rain overhead!

The Rainy Day
by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The day is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
The vine still clings to the moldering wall,
But at every gust the dead leaves fall,
And the day is dark and dreary.

My life is cold, and dark, and dreary;
It rains, and the wind is never weary;
My thoughts still cling to the moldering Past,
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
And the days are dark and dreary.

Be still, sad heart! and cease repining;
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining;
Thy fate is the common fate of all,
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.

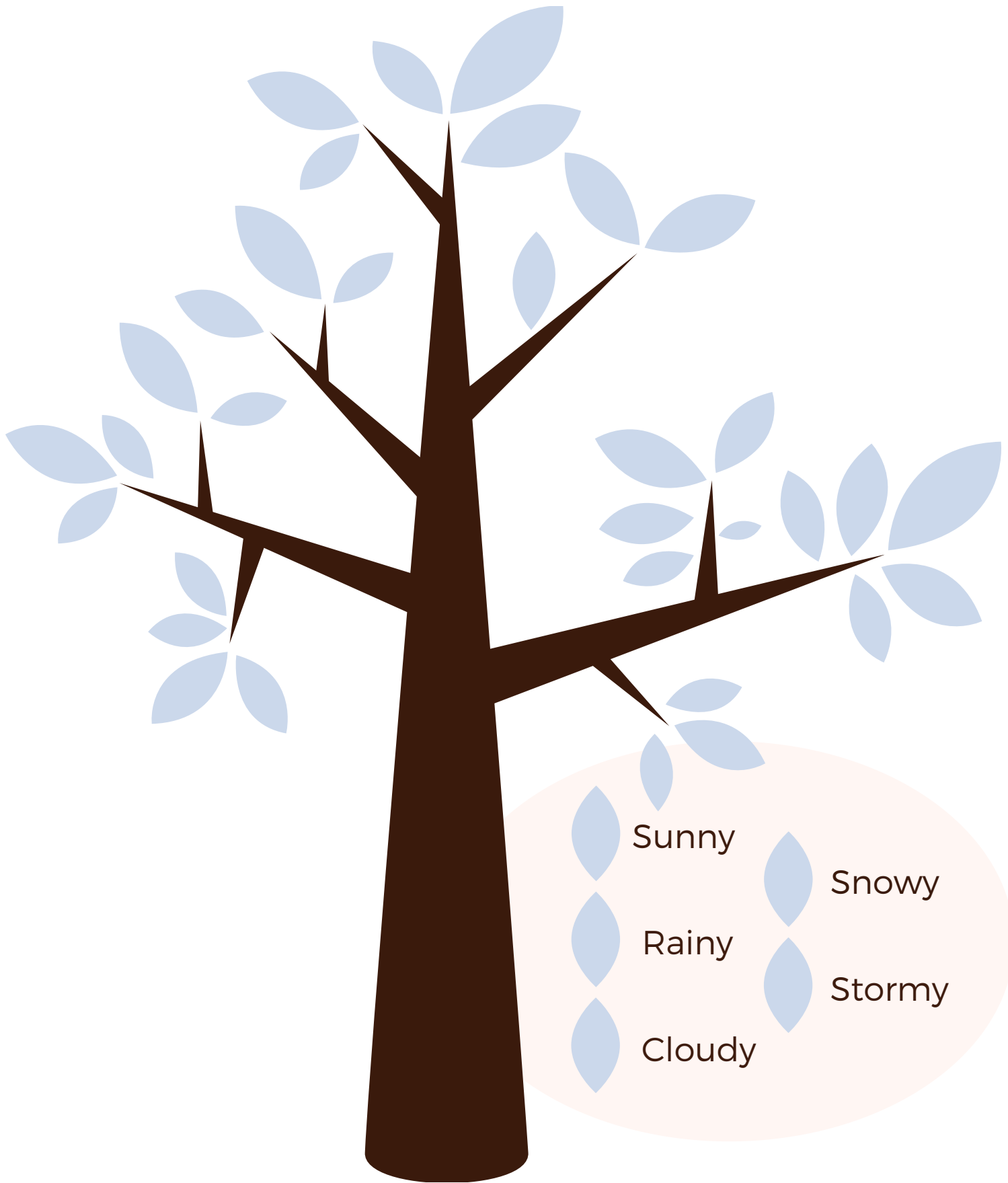


April
By Sara Teasdale

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.

April Weather Tree



My Nature Journal

April





APRIL 2024

Phenology Calendar

Keep track of all of the nature firsts or memorable weather that you see this month!
You can write them in that day's square or draw a picture.

Here are some examples.



- First dragonflies seen
- Mourning cloak butterfly spotted
- First ladybug spotted
- Spring peepers (frogs) heard
- First earthworms spotted
- Ducks nesting
- Sleet
- Wild ginger emerging
- First garter snake spotted
- Eastern meadowlark spotted
- First trillium in bloom
- Choke cherries blooming
- Red winged blackbirds heard
- 80 degree high temp
- Big storm with trees down
- 3 inches snow

						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 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