

May 2025

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

**Lilac
Recipes**

**Backyard
Foraging
BINGO**

**Make a
Twig
Broom**

**Wild About
Black Locust
Trees**

**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?

We'll be busy planting gardens at our house and helping our grown kids plant gardens at their houses in our little town. We're putting in lots of native plants for pollinators and also doing vegetable gardening, which we do every year. There is no supermarket tomato that compares to a fresh backyard garden tomato!

We'll be doing a lot of foraging, too. May is when we forage some of our favorite wild foods, like morel mushrooms, wild asparagus, ramps, young nettles, dandelion flowers, violets, cattails and more. I'm hoping to make some tasty recipes with our lilac flowers, too. If you have a lilac tree (or a generous neighbor) and want to try using the flowers in things like syrups, we have recipes in this issue of Wild Kids.

Our daughter Victoria is putting in a pond at her house and we're excited to help dig and install it. We have a tiny pond in our yard and it's fun seeing the wildlife that visits. We even had a beautiful white opossum who came for a drink one time (that's a picture of her above). Fun fact: Not only do opossums help clean up your yard of pests and rotting fruit, but they eat up to 4,000 ticks a week and help protect us from Lyme Disease! We have a small pump in our pond to keep the water moving so mosquitos don't lay eggs in it, but people with bigger ponds sometimes put fish in them to gobble up the mosquitos.

What about you? What fun things are you hoping to do soon in nature? I hope you find lots of wonderful ways to play and learn in nature 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.

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Go Wild in May!

10 WAYS TO PLAY & LEARN WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

Play Backyard Foraging Bingo (see the next page)

Go for a walk in the rain

Make a twig broom (we show you how in this issue)

Stay up late or get up really early to watch the Eta Aquarids Meteor Shower, which peaks overnight on May 4-5

Visit a state or national park

Look for a cool or pretty rock every day of the month & line them up outside – at the end of the month pick your favorite to keep & write the month on the bottom

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

Take a picture of your feet in nature every day this month and try to make each one different

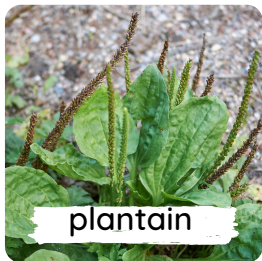
Start tracking the birds you see and see if you can ID 50 kinds by the end of the year

Find something in nature to help -- a worm stranded in a puddle, a plant that needs water, etc.

Backyard Foraging Bingo

You don't need to go deep into secluded places in nature to find edible and medicinal wild plants. Even in your own yard or neighborhood, you can find so many! See how many of these wild plants you can spot this month. Make an x over the ones you spot and try to get a BINGO either across, down, or diagonally.

Not all of these may be in your area and some of them may be hard to find. We have a blank Bingo on the next page if you want to make your own board.



plantain



crab apple



dead nettle



nettle



purslane



hosta



violets



pineapple weed



maple



wood sorrel



burdock



chickweed

FREE



dandelion



miner's lettuce



curly dock



clover



redbud



spruce tips



mallow



ground ivy



rose



henbit



lambsquarters



walnut

Remember that it's often one part of a plant that's edible or medicinal, like just the fruits or leaves. Also remember to never forage an area that has been sprayed with pesticides or herbicides, or any plant you're not 100% sure of. Any time you forage a plant, research it really well beforehand & be sure to get permission first.

My Foraging Bingo

How to Play: Write down wild edible and medicinal plants that are in your area this time of year, one in each square. If you need suggestions, do a web search for foraging and your location and the month or season. Make an x over the ones you spot and try to get a BINGO either across, down, or diagonally. To make it a bigger challenge, try to get a blackout by marking off every square.

		FREE		

Make a Besom Broom

From twigs and dried plants

Here's a fun craft to do with twigs and dried plants you can gather doing spring cleanup of your yard and in nature.

Besom brooms have been used for hundreds of years all around the world. Some people call them witch's brooms. They are bundles of dried twigs or plants that were wrapped around strong sticks.

In Europe, besom brooms were often made of bundles of birch twigs that were bound with willow wands around young ash branches. They were also made of broom plant, heather, forsythia, hawthorn, mugwort and pussy willow trimmings. Benjamin Franklin is credited with bringing broom corn to the United States for making besom brooms. Lots of people also just use straw or switchgrass.

To make your own besom broom, gather some thin twigs or sturdy dried plants and a nice straight stick to use as a handle in the middle. Wrap them tightly with twine, vines, wire or even a rubber band, and then wrap that with rope, twine or ribbon.

You can trim the bottom of your besom broom to make it straight, or you can trim it to be rounded or leave it as it is.

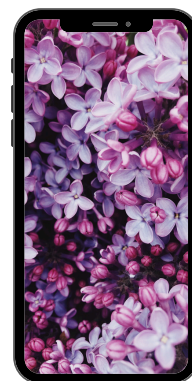
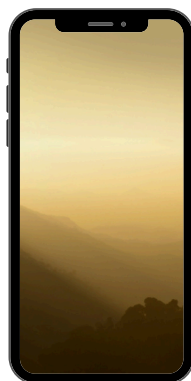
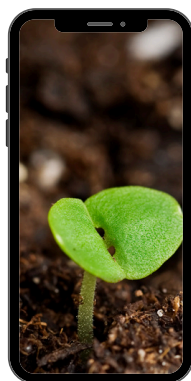
Besom brooms are great for sweeping leaves off the lawn, light snow off the ground, or for hanging up as a decoration. You can also make a small one and use it as a whisk broom.

What will you use your besom broom for?



May Nature Photo Challenge

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



1 Skyline

2 Broken

3 Seedling

4 Bird

5 Puddle

6 Flower

7 Muddy

8 Weather

9 Wildlife

10 Hole

11 Insect

12 Cracked

13 Pastel

14 Natural Y or X

15 Rough

16 Soft

17 Green

18 Shadow

19 Colorful

20 Symmetrical

21 Shadow

22 Edible

23 Water

24 Smooth

25 Sharp

26 Busy

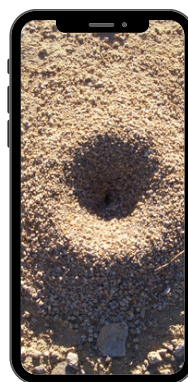
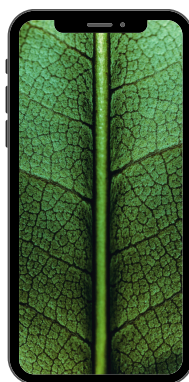
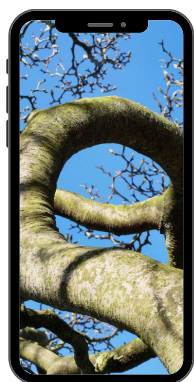
27 Rocks

28 Old

29 Pink

30 Sparkling

31 Feet



Wild About Black Locust



Black locust trees (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) are fascinating trees that can help people and nature. They are native to the southeastern United States but they have spread widely across North America and even to other parts of the world.

One really cool thing about black locust trees is that they grow really fast. They can grow up to 24 inches (2 feet!) per year, making them one of the fastest-growing hardwood trees. This makes them great for reforestation projects and for providing quick shade and windbreaks. Their deep roots also help prevent soil erosion, making them very helpful in places that are vulnerable to erosion (where wind and water are removing the soil). They also help nearby trees by doing something called fixing nitrogen in the soil, which means they take nitrogen from their environment and release it into the soil so other nearby plants have the nitrogen they need to grow.

Black locust trees also provide important shelter and food for wildlife. Their flowers bloom in late spring and are a rich source of nectar for bees and other pollinators. Their seeds and pods are also a food source for lots of birds and small mammals. Their dense leaves offer shelter and nesting sites for many birds and insects, too.

People can also forage black locust flowers and pods! The flowers are fragrant and sweet. They can be eaten fresh, added to salads, used to make jams and jellies, or even be used to make a fritters and pancakes. The young pods are edible when they are still green and can be cooked and eaten like green beans. The inner bark can also be used to make a tea that is rich in vitamin C.

Despite their benefits, black locust trees can be considered invasive in some places outside of their native range, especially because they grow so fast and spread so easily. That's one reason it's important to find out what plants are native where you live.

Are Black Locust trees native where you live? Have you ever seen one? Have you ever foraged one? See what you can find out and make a note here:

Black Locust trees are ___ native ___ non-native where I live.

Seen (location and date) _____

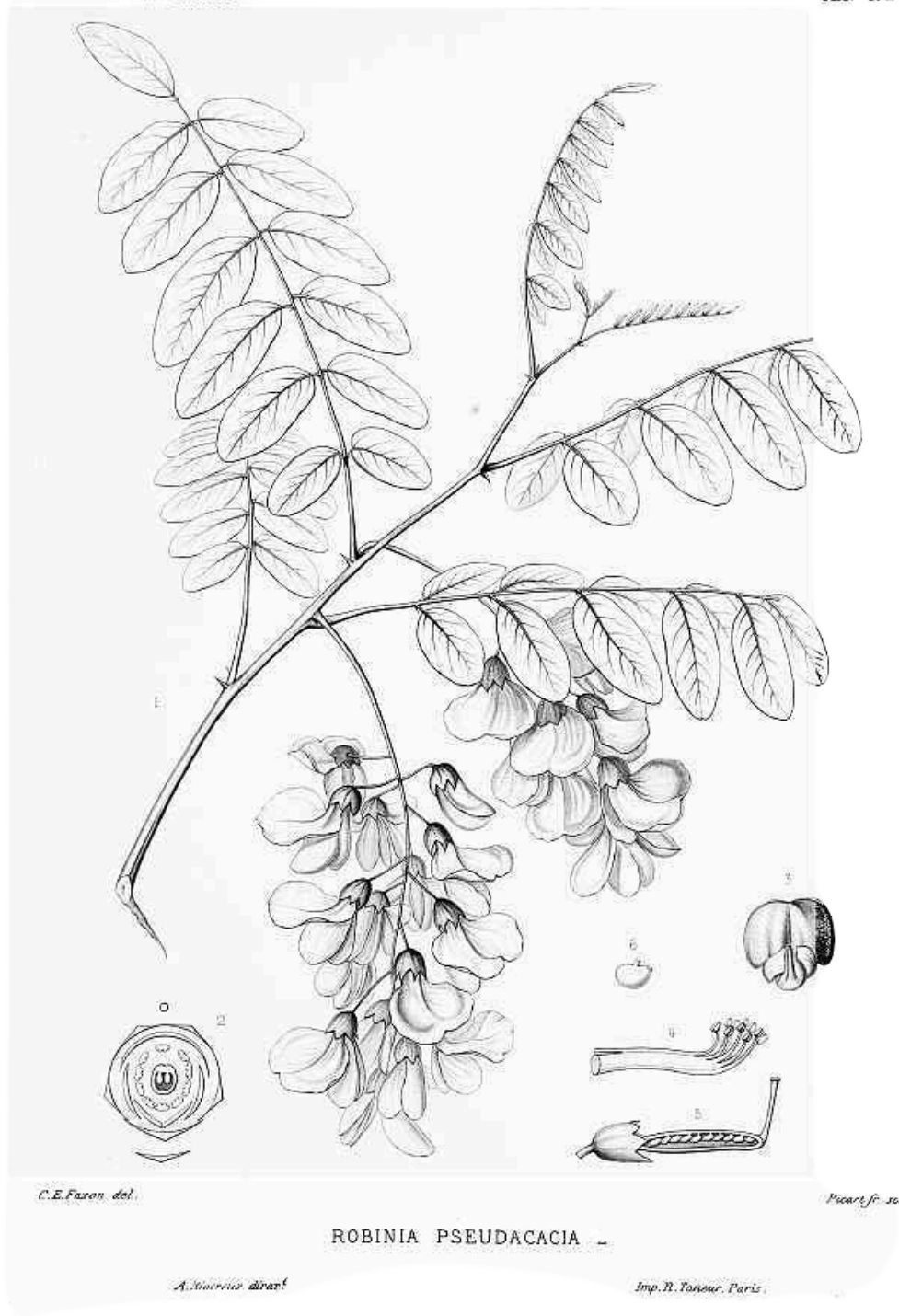


BLACK LOCUST

(*Robinia pseudoacacia*)

Silva of North America.

Tab. CXII



Lilac Recipes



Flowers from the common lilac tree (*Syringa vulgaris*) are edible, as long as they come from a shrub that hasn't been sprayed with any pesticides. You can use them to make all kinds of neat recipes! Here are some very easy ones to try.

A note on color: A lot of times you'll see lilac recipes with beautiful purple colors. When we cook with lilacs they won't really release their purple color, so the people who made those recipes used food coloring or other ingredients. If you want to make your lilac recipes purple, try adding a few blueberries and smashing them or a dash of elderberry juice. Remember this can change the flavor a little bit though. Another way to keep the pretty purple color is to just add more fresh lilac flowers to your recipe after it's done.



Lilac Lemonade: Make lemonade your favorite way (with fresh lemons and sugar or just with your favorite mix) and then add one or two bunches of fresh, clean lilac flowers to the pitcher. Cover and put in the fridge overnight to infuse the flavors. Strain and serve!

Lilac Ice Cubes: Rinse lilac flowers in cold water. Fill an ice cube tray with cold water, sprinkle in your lilac flowers and freeze. Use your lilac ice cubes in water, lemonade, or anywhere to make drinks extra fancy.



Lilac Simple Syrup: Put equal amounts of sugar and water in a pan, with twice that amount of washed lilac flowers removed from their stems. Heat it on the stove until the sugar dissolves, stirring. Remove from heat and let cool, then strain. Keep it in a jar in the fridge. Use it to sweeten tea, to make lemonade, in any recipe that calls for simple syrup like canning pears, or even on pancakes.

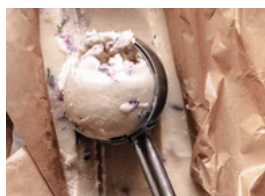
Lilac Water: Rinse a bunch of fresh lilac flowers in cold water and put in a jar. Cover with fresh, cold water and put a lid on it. Put it in the fridge for several hours or overnight. Strain and serve.

Lilac Lemon Honey: Cut an organic lemon into slices and gather one bunch of fresh lilac flowers. Rinse the flowers in cold water and shake dry. Use a fork to rake off the flowers into a bowl. Pour a little bit of honey (preferably raw, but any kind will do) in the bottom of a jar and then put in one lemon slice and a few lilac flowers. Add more honey, then another lemon slice and more flowers. Keep layering this way until your jar is nearly full. Use a fork or spoon to gently press everything down under the honey, and then use a damp cloth to wipe the rim. Give it a good whack on the counter a few times to release any air bubbles, put the lid on, and put it in the fridge. Let it sit for a few days to infuse all the flavors, and then strain out the solids. Put your honey in a jar and keep it in the fridge. You can use it in tea, on top of yogurt or oatmeal, or even just have a spoonful if you have a sore throat. It will keep in your fridge for about a month.

Lilac ice cream

Ingredients:

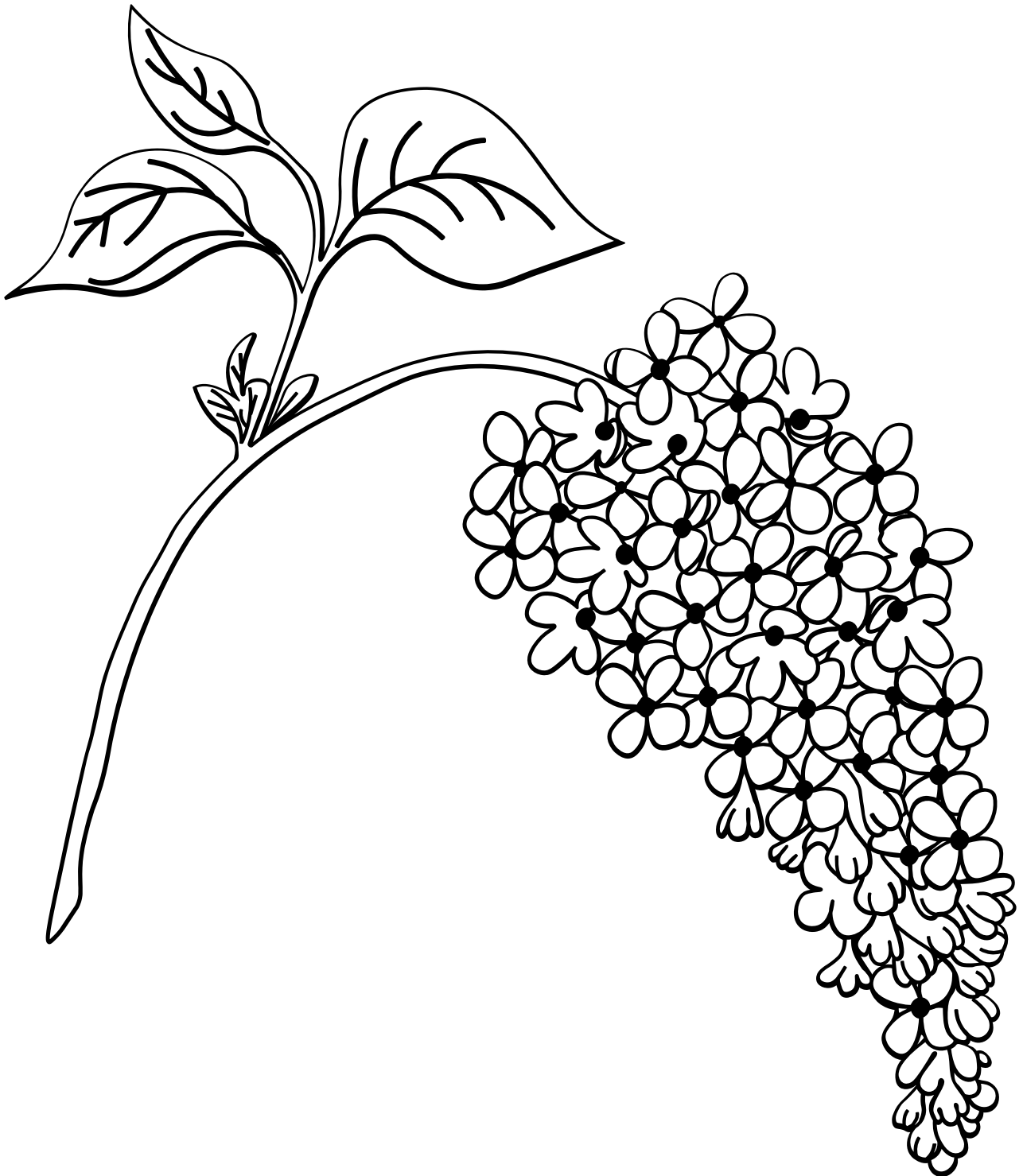
- 1-2 cups lilac flowers, plus extra
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk



Rinse and dry your lilac flowers. Heat your cream in a pan until it's very hot and pour it over your lilac flowers. Let it cool completely and then put it in the refrigerator (covered) for a few hours or overnight. Strain out the flowers and whip the cream until it's fluffy. Stir in the sweetened condensed milk and your extra flowers. Pour the mixture into your cold loaf pan, cover with plastic wrap or waxed paper and freeze overnight. Thaw for a few minutes before scooping & serving.

LILAC

(*Syringa vulgaris*)



Songs for May

Since we learned about besom brooms this edition, here are some historic songs about them. You can tell from the songs that they were very popular and you can also tell that songwriters liked to copy from each other!

Broom Besoms, Original Scottish Version
By Robert Burns (1759-1796)

Chorus

Buy broom besoms! Wha will buy them now?
Fine heather ringers, better never grew.

I maun hae a wife, whatsoe'er she be;
An she be a woman, that's eneugh for me.

If that she be bony, I shall think her right:
If that she be ugly, where's the odds at night?

O, an she be young, how happy shall I be?
If that she be auld, the sooner she will die.

If that she be fruitfu', O! what a joy is there!
If she be barren, less will be my care.

Be she green or gray; be she black or fair;
Let her be a woman, I shall seek nae mair.

If she like a drappie, she and I'll agree;
If she dinna like it, there's the mair for me.

Broom Besoms
Standard English Translation

Chorus

Buy broom sweeping brushes!
Who will buy them now?
Fine heather ringers, better never grew.

I must have a wife, what so ever she be;
If she be a woman, that is enough for me.

If that she be lovely, I shall think her right:
If that she be ugly, where is the odds at night?

O, if she be young, how happy shall I be?
If that she be old, the sooner she will die.

If that she be fruitful, O! what a joy is there!
If she be barren, less will be my care.

Be she green or gray; be she black or fair;
Let her be a woman, I shall seek no more.

If she like a drappie (a drink), she and I will agree;
If she does not like it, there is the more for me.



Broom Buzzems
By William Purvis, (1752-1832)
also known as Blind Willie

If ye want a buzzem
For to sweep yor hoose
Come to me, ma honey
Ye may hae yor choose.

Chorus:
Buy broom buzzems,
Buy them when they're new
Fine heather bred uns
Better never grew.

Buzzems for a penny
Rangers for a plack
If ye winnot buy
I'll tie them on my back.

Buy broom buzzems...

If aa had a horse
Ad wad hev a cairt;
If aa had a wife
She wad tyek me pairt.

Buy broom buzzems...

Had aa but a wife
Aa care not what she be-
If she's but a woman
That's enyuf for me

Buy broom buzzems...

If she liked a droppie,
Her and I'd agree;
If she didn't like it,
There's the mair for me.



My Nature Journal

May






May 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*

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!

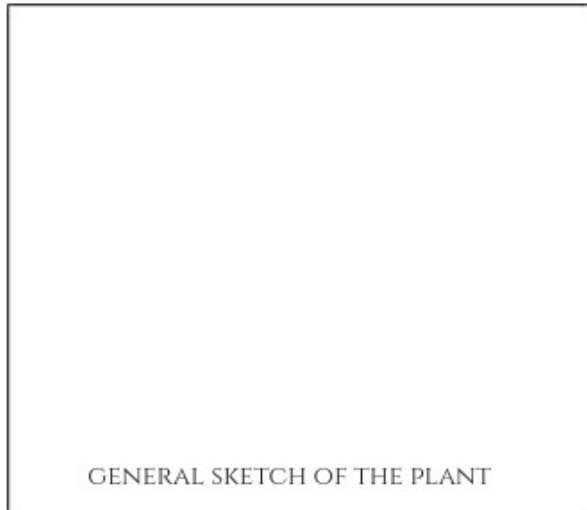
Week 1 Observations

Week 2 Observations

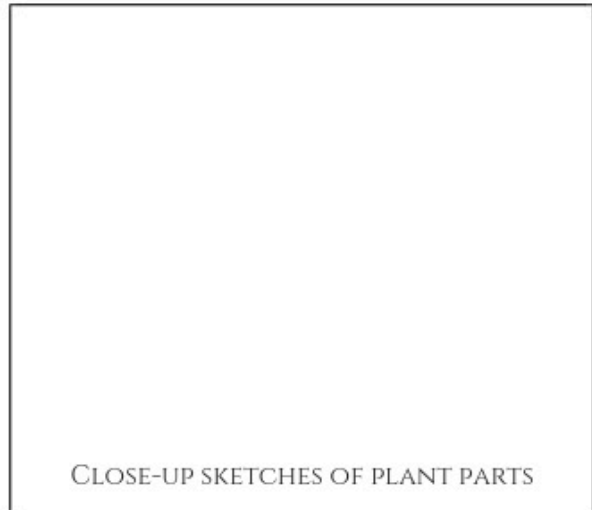
Week 3 Observations

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.