

October 2025

WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS

**Autumn Leaf
Shape Hunt**

**Fall Nature
Art Pages**

**October Nature
Collection Challenge**

**The Stick
Strategy Game**

Forbidden Butternuts

Fall Foraging

Helpful Hackberry Trees

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

From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Happy October!

What do you love to do in autumn?

Every year for about twenty years, our family has helped out at a fun outdoor event called History Fest. It runs the first week of October at a beautiful place called MacGowan's Farm. All kinds of people dress up like people from history of all different time periods and parts of the world, and teach kids about history in hands-on ways. We fire a real cannon, launch a pumpkin way up into the sky over the river, have sword fights, shear sheep, chat with people playing past presidents like Abraham Lincoln, and much more. All of our family members dress up as whatever character and time period we choose and teach schoolkids about things like old time games, historic events and famous people.

A few years ago I brought my alphabet foraging book and my daughter Fiona read it to kids and taught them about things to forage. We went around the site that morning and I looked for things to gather there for examples. Even though it was October and it's not a huge site, we found so many wild edible and medicinal plants to show them, just on that short walk! We found lion's mane mushrooms, wild grapes (past their prime), plantain leaves, willow bark and leaves, mullein, apples, pine needles, dandelions, juniper berries, garlic mustard and more.

We're looking forward to spending another week playing in history this month, but this time we'll be different people from history. I will definitely check for those lions mane mushrooms while I'm there though, because that's a really cool mushroom to find and forage.

Do you have any cool fall traditions that you do? Maybe this year you can start some new ones!

I hope you have a wild and wonderful 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

Play the stick strategy game (we have directions in this issue)

Head outside with our fall art pages and make some nature art

Gather native wildflower seeds from dried seedheads and toss them in places that could use more flowers

Identify an unknown plant in your yard or neighborhood and look up what it is good for

Take part in our October nature item collection challenge

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

Play the bird song memory game at ebirdr.com/game

Head someplace very dark and look for the Orionids Meteor Shower on October 21-22

Look at the full moon supermoon on October 7

Look for samaras (helicopter seeds) from trees like sugar maples and see how far you can make them fly

Play the stick game!

This is a really tricky strategy game!
It's from a book I'm working on of 365
ways to play with math.



Gather 13 sticks (or rocks, acorns or
other nature items) and put them
between yourself and your opponent.

Take turns taking 1, 2 or 3 sticks from
the pile (you choose how many to take).



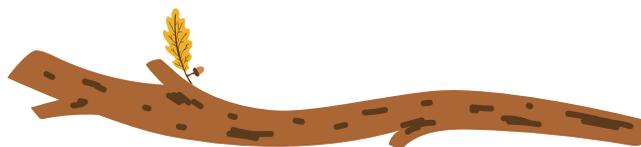
You win if you take the last stick.

It's much harder than it seems!

There's a secret to being the one to
take the last stick, but even once you
figure it out it's very hard to plan!

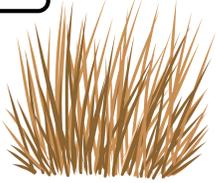
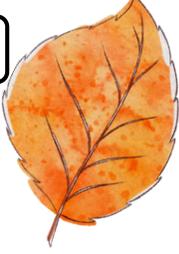
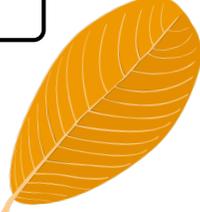
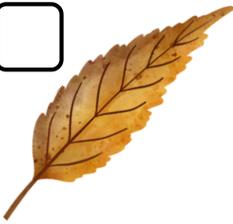
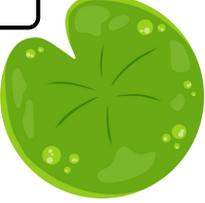
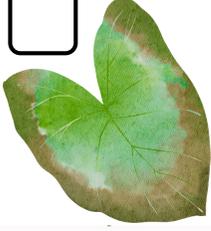
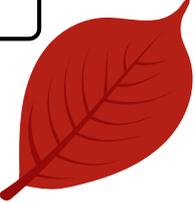
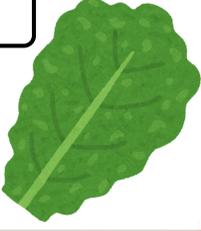


Have fun!



AUTUMN LEAF SHAPE HUNT

Head outside (and inside, if you have houseplants!) and see how many of these shapes of leaves you can find. This is one way that people help identify unknown trees and plants. Many leaves fit more than one category and that's fine!

<p>Linear Slender, narrow, long</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>Ovate Oval</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>Elliptical Ellipse-shaped</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>Oblong Rectangular</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 
<p>Cordate Heart-shaped</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>Lanceolate Lance-shaped</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>Acicular Needle-shaped</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>Reniform Kidney-shaped</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 
<p>Orbicular Orbit-shaped</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>Sagittate Arrowhead-shaped</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>Hastate Two-lobed sagittate</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>Lyrate Lyre-shaped</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 
<p>Spatulate Spoon-shaped</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>Rhomboid Diamond-shaped</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>Oblique Unequal leaf base</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<p>Cuneate Wedge-shaped</p> <input type="checkbox"/> 

Fall Nature Art

Take these pages outside and make some art!

Arrange some small, flat petals, flowers or leaves in a design and cover them with clear packing tape

Use a feather or your finger to paint a design with mud

Use a smooth stone to pound leaves or flower petals into a design

Put a leaf under this page and color over it with the side of a crayon to make a rubbing

Look for colorful wild berries
to stamp here in a design

Dribble muddy water in a cool
pattern

Press nature items like leaves
and pine needles in mud and
stamp them here

Draw a picture using charcoal
from a fire

Signed _____

Date _____

What Can You Forage in Fall?

It might seem like the foraging season is over in autumn, but some plants are best to forage in fall!

Roots are great to forage in fall because they are big and full of stored energy for the plant to help it get through the winter.

Some fall roots that people forage a lot are:

- burdock root for soups and stews
- dandelion roots (for medicine or a coffee substitute)
- jerusalem artichokes (sunchokes)



There are still some **fruits and berries** to forage, such as:

- Crab apples for crab apple cider (wash them and cut them in half or quarters, then simmer until it takes on lots of color and flavor, strain and add sugar to taste)
- Hawthorn berries for jelly or tinctures (medicine)
- Persimmons to use for baking or eat fresh (be sure they're fully ripe for best flavor)
- Rose hips for tea
- Staghorn sumac berries for spice or delicious iced tea



Some **greens** are still great this time of year, such as:

- Wood sorrel for salads or sandwiches
- Violet leaves for salads
- Plantain leaves for making healing skin balms



Seeds and grains like:

- Dock seeds to use as a flour substitute
- Sunflower seeds for snacking
- Wild rice for cooking



This is just a drop in the bucket! What are you finding where you live this season?

October

Nature Collection Challenge

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.

If you don't want to collect the items, use these as nature photo of the day prompts – or do both!



- | | | | | | |
|----|-------------|----|--------------|----|---------|
| 1 | White | 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 | Orange |
| 8 | Flower | 18 | Nut | 28 | Edible |
| 9 | Feather | 19 | Dried | 29 | Rough |
| 10 | Seed | 20 | Asymmetrical | 30 | Pretty |
| | | | | 31 | Spooky |



The Forbidden Butternut

Butternut trees are related to walnut trees and produce nuts that are a lot like walnuts, but milder, less messy, and better tasting. They taste a little bit buttery, which is where they got their name.

The crazy thing about butternuts, though, is that they are rare in some places and that has led to people making up some pretty weird laws about them!

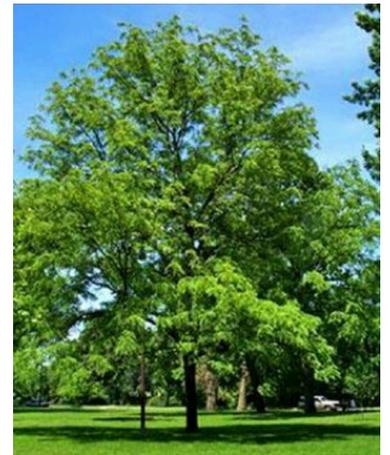
In the state of Minnesota, they are rare enough that they are considered endangered. In Minnesota, that means it's illegal to gather the nuts even if it's to plant more butternut trees and help them be less rare.

Not only that, but it's even illegal for the state of Minnesota's own workers to pick up the nuts and try to plant more of them because the endangered species law is so strict! According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, "not even the State Nursery can possess the nuts for purposes of propagation."

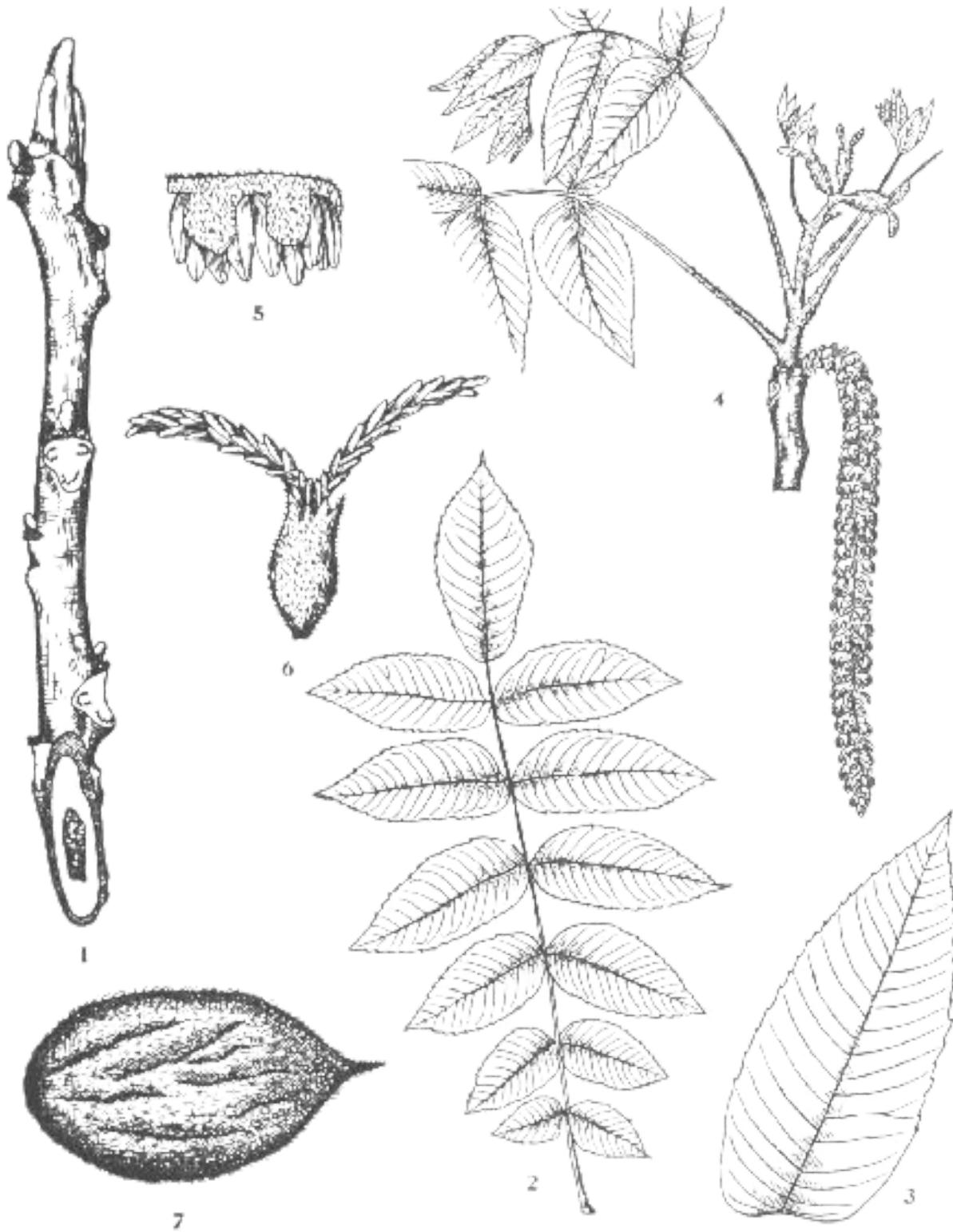
I think maybe some kids in Minnesota should write their lawmakers and suggest improving that law!

(Kids have helped create new laws before. For instance, high school students in New Jersey wrote the Civil Rights Cold Case Records Collection Act to make government records public in unsolved civil rights cases, and the president signed it into law in 2019.)

If you don't live in Minnesota and you want to collect butternuts, you can forage them but you have to beat the squirrels to them because they are squirrels' favorite snacks! I recommend going to ForagerChef.com for his foraging instructions if you and your grown ups want to give butternuts a try.



BUTTERNUT
(*Juglans cinerea* L.)



Helpful Hackberry

Hackberries (*Celtis occidentalis*) are small fruits that are sometimes called snackberries or sugarberries. What's neat about hackberries is that they stay on the trees even into winter.

Historians think that early American colonists called these trees hackberries because they looked a lot like wild cherry trees, which had been known as "hagberries" in Scotland.

The trees are very hardy and grow all over the world. A lot of people plant them along streets too, so they are very common even if you've never noticed them before.

Most fruits that we forage are only available in the summertime, so hackberries are really special. People forage them way into fall and even winter. They are also especially good for foraging because they are one of the few wild foods that contains fat, protein and carbohydrates. Foraging author Samuel Thayer says they are "the closest thing you can get to a complete meal from one plant."

People have been eating them for thousands of years. They were a staple food for many Native American tribes and they were even found in the tomb of "Peking Man" from ancient China.

Hackberry trees grow very tall, which can make foraging their fruits tricky. Some trees can grow to 100 feet tall! Young hackberry trees in neighborhoods are easier to forage from.

To look for hackberry trees, keep an eye out for their bark that is so grooved and bumpy that some people call it "Grand Canyon bark." The leaves also frequently have weird little balls on the undersides called a really silly name -- hackberry nipple galls, that are caused by insects who like these trees. In the springtime, look for their long white flower clusters.

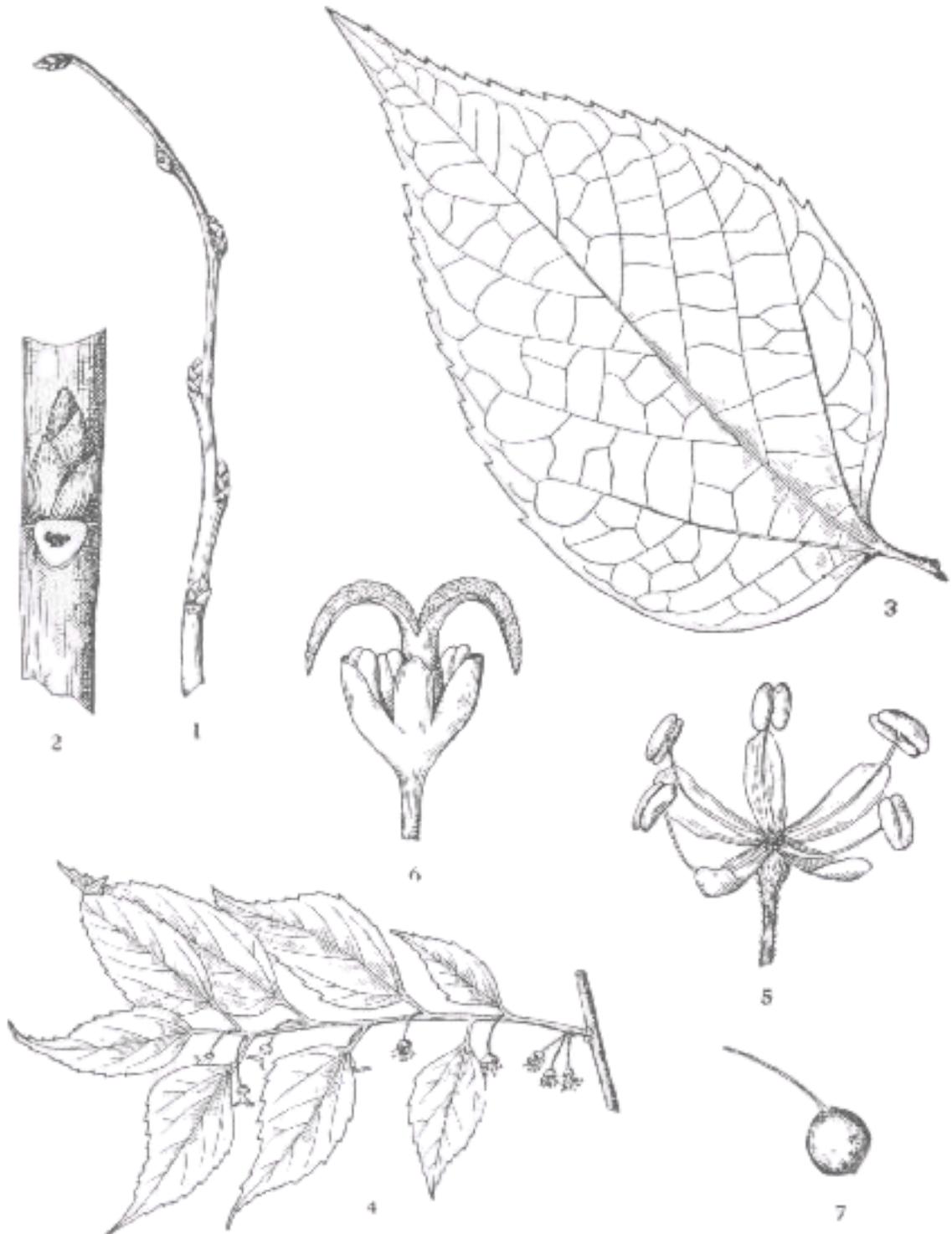
Hackberries taste a little bit like a date with a big crunchy seed inside. Some people eat them fresh but most people use them for recipes like hackberry milk, which is like a sweet nut milk. They are not actually berries – they are officially "drupes" which are fruits around central seeds like cherries and plums. With hackberries, that central seed is really big and often ground up.

If you want to see a fun video of the wonderful foraging lady known as Black Forager, she has a YouTube video called HACKBERRY - AKA TREE CANDY where she shows what the trees and berries look like and how to process them into a moldable candy that tastes kind of like a granola bar.

Have you ever seen a hackberry? Now that you know about these cool trees, see if you can find one sometime!



HACKBERRY
(*Celtis occidentalis*)



October Poetry

An October Garden
Christina Rossetti

In my Autumn garden I was fain
To mourn among my scattered roses;
Alas for that last rosebud which uncloses
To Autumn's languid sun and rain
When all the world is on the wane!
Which has not felt the sweet constraint of June,
Nor heard the nightingale in tune.

Broad-faced asters by my garden walk,
You are but coarse compared with roses:
More choice, more dear that rosebud which uncloses,
Faint-scented, pinched, upon its stalk,
That least and last which cold winds balk;
A rose it is though least and last of all,
A rose to me though at the fall.



In October
by Bliss Carman

Now come the rosy dogwoods,
The golden tulip-tree,
And the scarlet yellow maple,
To make a day for me.
The ash-trees on the ridges,
The alders in the swamp,
Put on their red and purple
To join the autumn pomp.
The woodbine hangs her crimson
Along the pasture wall,
And all the bannered sumacs
Have heard the frosty call.
Who then so dead to valor
As not to raise a cheer,
When all the woods are marching
In triumph of the year?

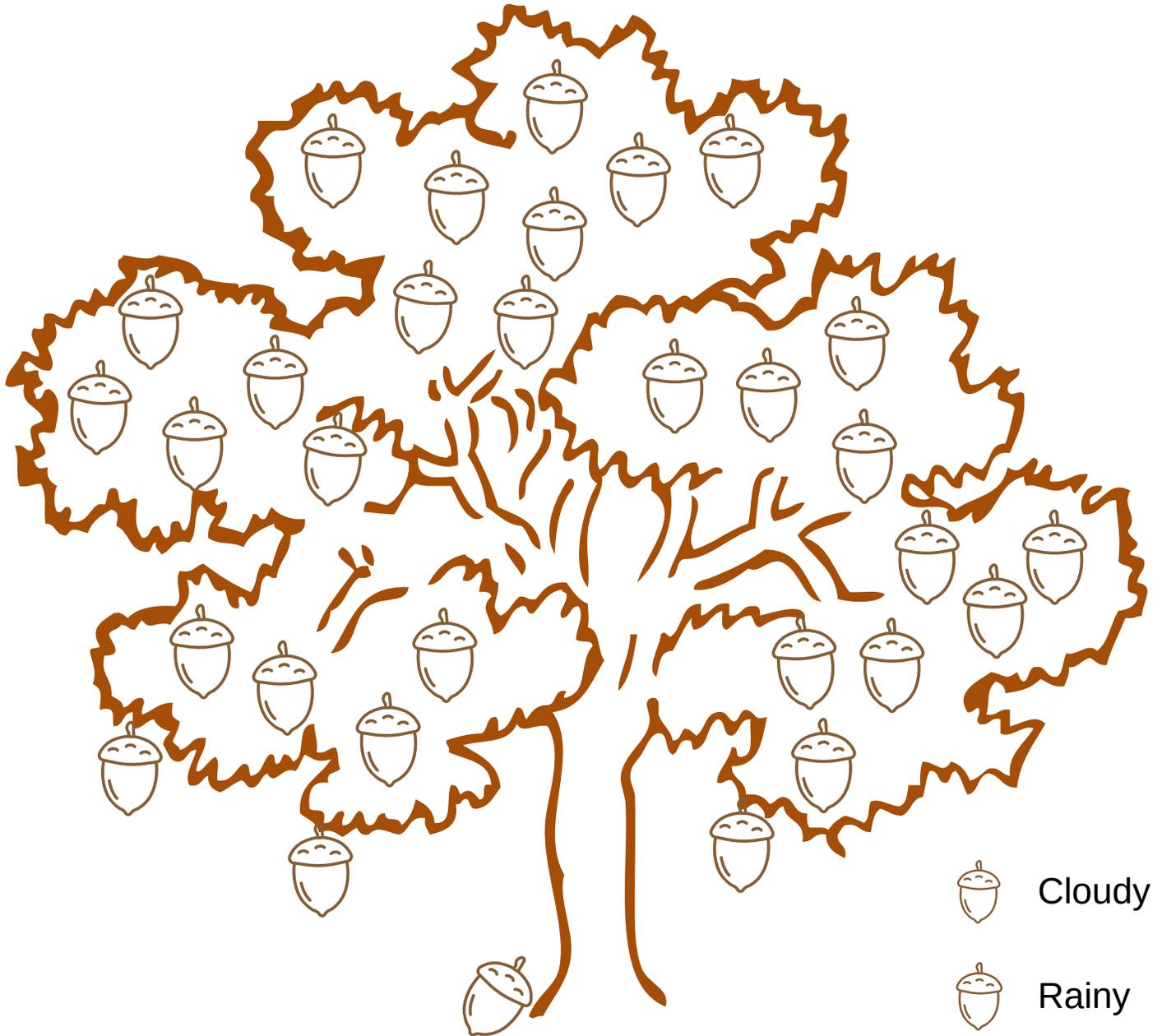


My Nature Journal

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 _____

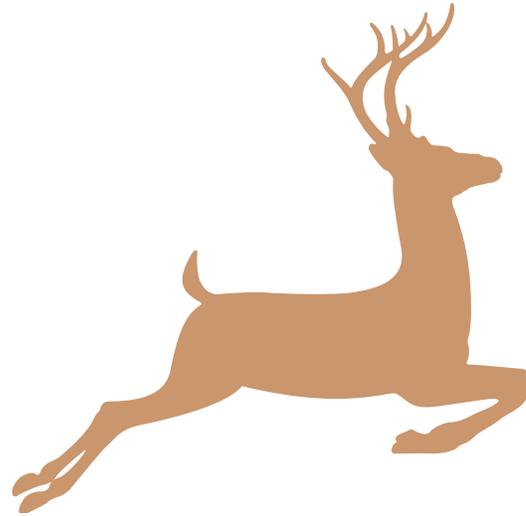
LOOKALIKES & HOW TO POSITIVELY ID:

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.