Back to School in the Park

BY ELIZABETH KUBEY

Hello, young and young-at-heart botanists. My name is Elizabeth. Before CNPS, I studied environmental studies and art studio at UC Berkeley. In the summertime and after college, I spent my days in California's beautiful Sierra Nevada, exploring nature and science with students like you. Beginning with this issue, I’ll be sharing fun activities just for you. This fall, I’m inviting you to explore the three activities described on these pages after school or during recess. You can also ask your teachers to bring the projects to the classroom.

I Notice, I Wonder, It Reminds Me Of

(Inspired by BEETLES Project lesson, available at beetlesproject.org, adapted here with permission). In this activity, you’ll use the directions below to become a great observer. Have your friends join in the fun!

✓ Best for ages 8+    ✓ 15 - 30 minutes    ✓ No materials needed/Outdoors with native plants

“I Notice …” (making observations)
We use our senses (sight, touch, smell, hearing, taste) to make observations in the moment. (Always check with an adult before tasting anything!) Being able to make observations helps us find and learn about native plants.

Find a native plant or natural object. If it still growing, try to leave it where it is. Find a partner to share your object with and share your observations with them aloud. If you get stuck, explore using a new sense or looking at the object from a new angle.

Examples of observations:
✓ “I notice the green leaves are sticky.”
✓ “I notice it is yellow and has 5 petals.”

Examples of statements that are not observations:
✗ “I notice it is a monkeyflower.” (That is an identification.)
✗ “I notice it looks pretty.” (That is an opinion.)

“I Wonder …” (asking questions)
With the same partner, and the same plant, ask questions beginning with “I wonder.” Examples: “I wonder, what caused the holes on the leaves? I wonder why its leaves are sticky?”

“It Reminds Me of …” (making connections)
Finally, make statements that connect your plant, and parts of your plant to what it looks like, an experience, or information. Examples: “It reminds me of a flower I saw in a book called a monkeyflower. It reminds me of a surprised emoji 😱”

Try using these prompts with other plants you find. You can use them to become curious and learn just about anything!
Native Plant Leaf Art

This activity will help you remember what you observed and make some cool art. Materials: native plant material, paper, crayon, watercolor, brushes

1) Arrange your plants on a flat surface with the leaves vein side up. Place the sheet of paper over the leaves.

2) Using the broad side of an unwrapped crayon, rub firmly over the paper to reveal the leaf skeletons.

3) Paint over the crayon leaf rubbings with watercolor paint for unique artistic effect.

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Strike A #PlantPose

Now that you have become an expert observer, can you imitate California native plants?

Show us how they move.
Show us how they look.
Show us how they make you feel.

Ask your parent/guardian to take a photo and share it on Facebook or Instagram with the hashtag #PlantPose and tag @CaliforniaNativePlantSociety for a chance to be featured on our page!

Fun for all ages!