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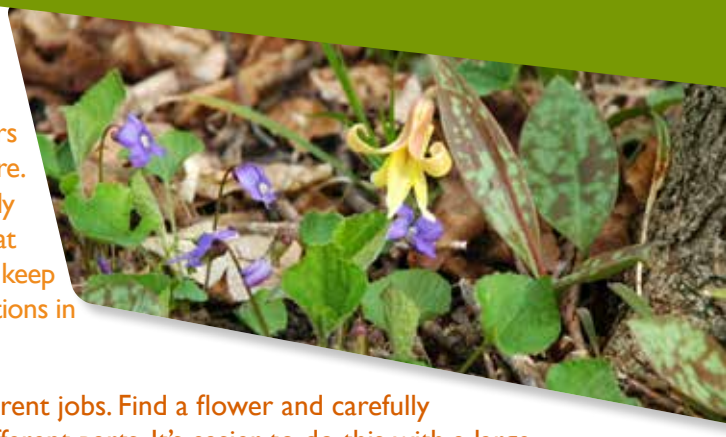
Venture Out!

Topic 5: Wildflowers



Day 1 Strategies

Flowers attract insects through smell, colors (in visible and UV light) and flower structure. Go outside and see if you can find a brightly colored flower, a smelly flower and one that has a unique shape. Choose one flower to keep an eye on for the week and make observations in this Wildflower Journal.

Day 2 Structures

Flowers have different parts that do different jobs. Find a flower and carefully take it apart to see if you can find the different parts. It's easier to do this with a large, simple flower like a tulip, daffodil, pansy or snapdragon. **Can you find all of these parts?**

- Sepal – protects the flower before it opens
- Petals – Colorful to attract insects
- Stamens – Tiny sticks that hold the pollen
- Pistil – Small stalk where the pollen attaches
- Receptacle – Wide spot at the base of the pistil where the seeds form

Day 3 Seed Making

The purpose of a flower is to make seeds for the plant. When a flower receives pollen from another flower of the same species, pollination happens and the plant can make a seed. **Can you find any wildflower stalks that still have seeds from last fall? If not, why do you think they're gone? Visit your flower from day 1 and check on it each day to see if it ends up making seeds.**

Day 4 Energy

It takes a lot of energy for plants to be able to make flowers and seeds. To get this energy, plants use green leaves and stems to make their own food from sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide in a process called photosynthesis. **Go outside and look for green leaves and stems. What shapes do you see? What textures can you find?**

Day 5 Sunlight

Energy from the sun is a key ingredient for photosynthesis but not every plant needs the same amount of sun. In the woods, most wildflowers grow in the spring, before the leaves on the trees form. **Why do you think they do that? Can you find some plants that get a lot of sun? Can you find some plants that do not get a lot of sunshine? Check on your flower and see how much sun it gets at different times of the day.**

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Wildflower Conversation Starters by Grade Level

Kindergarten	Find a flower outdoors. Does the plant get a lot or a little bit of sunlight each day? Look around outside, does that kind of plant always grow in that amount of light or can it live with different amounts of sun and shade? Draw a picture of your plant and show how much sun and shade it needs.
1st Grade	Flowers are unique. They have different colors, shapes and sizes all for different reasons. Draw, build, or sculpt a flower of your own creation. Why did you choose that color? Why did you choose that shape? What makes your flower special?
2nd Grade	We know animals help with pollination, but did you know that animals also help disperse seeds? Some seeds have tasty packages (fruits and nuts) and some hitch a ride. Take a look outdoors and in your fridge to find some seeds. Do they use animals to travel or do they move in some other way?
3rd Grade	All plants have life cycles. Draw a life cycle for a plant that is in your outdoor space. What does it look like as a seed, a small plant, and a big plant? Can you find its flower? (Unless it's a conifer and has cones, it has some kind of flower, even if it's a tree. You might have to look up a picture if it's not blooming right now.)
4th Grade	Flower petals sometimes contain "secret" messages for their pollinators. Some of these designs are invisible to us because insects can see in the UV light spectrum and we can't. Take a look at the photos in this article. Which parts of the flower are brightest? Why do you think that is the case?
5th Grade	Explain photosynthesis to someone else. Remember to include what a plant needs to be able to make photosynthesis happen and what a plant gets from it. Look at photos or go visit plants that live where they don't get a lot of sun (under trees, under water). What adaptations do you notice that might help them collect more sunlight?