



CATALINA ISLAND
CONSERVANCY™

FAMILIES IN NATURE



Journal Prompt: Plant Observation

Overview

You can use a Nature Journal in many ways. When we use a journal to record observations over time we can learn about patterns in nature, changes in season and how species adapt to survive. This activity focuses on plant observations over time. When you observe a plant over time, you can learn how its appearance may change depending on the season.

Vocabulary

Climate: the weather of an area over time

Seasons: four periods of the year with distinct weather patterns

Weather: short term changes in the atmosphere day to day such as rain or sunshine

Background Information

Plants are specially adapted for the area in which they live. As seasons change, a plant's appearance may also change as it adapts to the changing weather. Catalina has a Mediterranean climate with cool, wet winters and warm, dry summers. These plants lose their leaves so they need less water during dry, drought times. You may have different types of plants in your community.

Materials

- Nature Journal
- Pencil or Colored Pencils
- Hand Lens or Magnifying Glass (optional)
- Ruler (optional)
- Plant Field Guide (optional)

Directions

1. Select a plant that interests you that you can visit weekly.
2. Each time you visit the plant, use your Nature Journal to record the date, time of day, temperature, weather (windy, sunny, etc.), location and soil conditions (wet, dry).
3. Next, sketch all parts of the plant. This can include the stem, leaves, flowers and/or fruits. Try to include several drawings, including a close view using your hand lens. Using basic shapes is a great first step for learning to draw. What shapes make up the structure of your plant?

4. After drawing, label your sketch with helpful details that might be difficult to draw. For example, your plant might have fuzzy leaves. A label of “fuzzy leaves” next to your drawing adds helpful detail. You might choose to be even more descriptive and write “small, white hairs on the underside of the leaf”.
5. When your drawing is complete and labeled, you may want to add additional information. Examples include:
 - Your ideas about why a plant has a certain structure or shape
 - Observations of other plants around you
 - Notes of any animal activity in the area
 - Questions you’d like to research back at home
6. Continue to go back each week and repeat these steps, tracking changes over time. Do you see a pattern between the weather or season and the appearance of your plant?

Career Connection

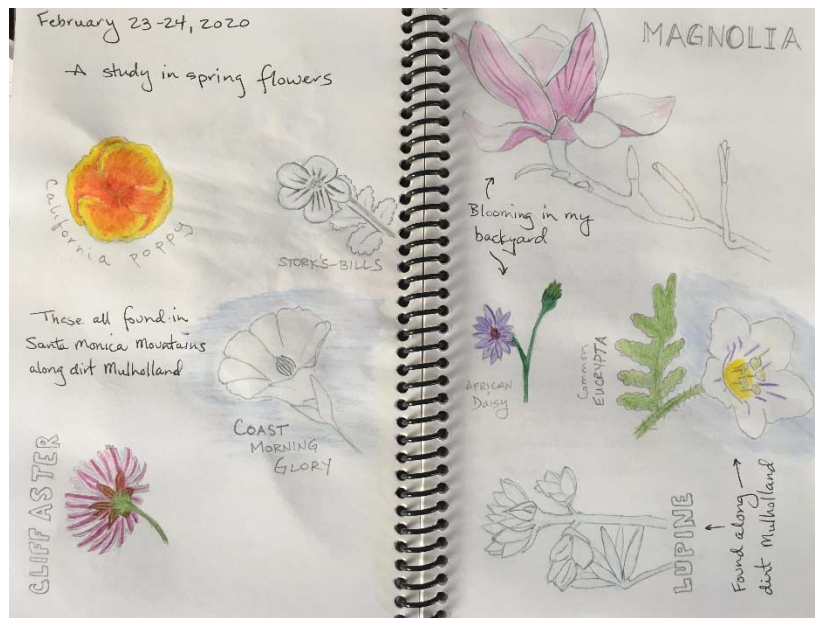
Scientists who study and research plants are botanists. A botanist may study plants all over the world learning how they grow, reproduce and survive in different climates. Landscapers and gardeners also work with plants. They have to know which types of plants can survive in different climates as well as use creativity to design and care for healthy and beautiful outdoor environments.

Extension

You may want to sketch your plants to scale. This means either drawing your plant at actual size, or a ratio of actual size such as 50% as large. You can use your ruler to help with this. Record measurements next to your drawing like a scientist would.

Sample Journal Page

This is just one example of a Nature Journal. What will yours look like? Remember, there is no wrong way to keep a journal!



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