



Nature Activities for April 2020 - Week One

Although the Greenbelt Environmental Education team is not seeing students in-person during the COVID 19 Pandemic, we still want to share ways in which you can engage with nature. We've created an activity for each day in April. When we see you again, tell us what your favorites were, and what you have learned!

April 1: Guess What's in the Bag: Collect natural items from outside in your backyard or local park (Sticks, acorns, leaves etc.) Without your child seeing items, put in a lunch bag. Play guess what is in the bag. Have your child put their hand in and pick up and describe one item they are holding without taking it out. (Soft, rough etc.). Have them guess what they are holding.

April 2: Weather Watch: Take a calendar or print one out from the computer. Put a thermometer outside. Everyday record the temperature and the precipitation. Write the temperature on the day of the calendar and draw clouds, raindrops or sun depending on what you see outside. Do you see any patterns in the weather?

April 3: Hiking Memory Game: This is a memory game based on what you might see on a hike. Example: The first person says' "I went on a hike and I saw a bird". The next player repeats what the first person said and adds his own, "I went on a hike and I saw a bird and a squirrel". The list keeps getting larger until someone can't remember the all of what was seen.

April 4: Exploring Mud: Spring is known as "Mud Season." "April showers bring May flowers." Go outside and make your own mud. Mix soil and water into mud cakes. Press shells, small toys, etc into the cakes. Leave to dry. Pull out the items and look at the impressions. Fossils were formed this way millions of years ago. Research which ancient animals and fossils.

Note: While doing these activities, we should be practicing social distancing, staying at least 6 feet from the nearest person. Frequent hand washing for twenty seconds or more is advised. These activities are recommended to be done with your immediate family or household. If you want to include other friends or family members, consider a virtual playdate through Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime, so we can share the learning fun.

Photo: Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) the native plant for which the Greenbelt's Bloodroot Valley is named.
Photo: John Kilcullen

For information on the Greenbelt's parks, trails and programs, visit: sigreenbelt.org



Nature Activities for April 2020 - Week Two

April 5: Take a Shape Walk: Cut out shapes: square, circle, triangle etc. from paper or old cereal boxes and punch a hole and string it together. Go outside and see how many things in nature have these shapes.

April 6: Create Rock Art: Find a few rocks, wash them with soap and water and let them dry. Get out your acrylic paints and start creating! Paint patterns or create animals if you like. Decorate your garden or desk, or write a story or poem about your special rock.

April 7: Create a Bird Nest via Web Cam: Google sites for cams that let you have a “bird’s eye” view of their nest. A good site is: allaboutbirds.org/cams. Monitor how the baby birds develop. Describe what you see. You may wish to visit the same site each day for a while and watch the birds grow up.

April 8: Draw a Nature Scene with Sidewalk Chalk: Read about how long an eagle’s wingspan is, the length of a whale, the height of a phragmites (a tall plant) or anything else in nature. Grab your chalk and go outside and see if you can draw the length and height, on your drive way or use string to measure them in your hallway. Don’t forget to bring your tape measure.

April 9: Nature Journal: Make your own nature journal. You can use any firm paper for the cover. Decorate it anyway you want. Put some blank paper inside. Fasten it together by punching holes through the cover and paper. Now you can write or draw your nature memories in it.

April 10: Natural Egg Dye: Coffee, juice, onions, berries, and spinach all make great dyes. Visit <https://www.incredibleegg.org/easter/egg-decorating/naturally-dyed-eggs/> for more detailed instructions

April 11: Find Clues that Animals Live in Your Neighborhood: Go for a walk and look for clues that animals left behind. Some clues could be chewed acorns sitting on a rock, holes in leaves, nests in trees, or bark rubs from antlers etc. List these items in a notebook, natural journal, or on a piece of paper attached to a clipboard. Remember to stay at least 6 feet away from other people.

Nature Activities for April 2020 - Week Three

April 12: Scavenger Hunt: Make a list of natural items, or find one online and print. List these items in a notebook, natural journal, or on a piece of paper attached to a clipboard and have a pen, pencil, crayon, or marker to circle or cross out each item you find. Here are some items to get you started: a twig, a rock, something soft, something rough, a seed...

April 13: Turn a Twig into a Magic Wand: Go outside and find a small branch. Paint it many colors. Glue pom-poms, gems etc. on it. Weave some colorful yarn or string with beads around the upper branches on top. You now are a nature wizard!

April 14: Get Ready for Birding: Research what birds live in your neighborhood and parks. Order a *Peterson's Guide to the Eastern Birds* and/or research online which birds can be found in your area. Read about the birds and look at the maps. Pick out your favorite bird. Get ready for their return the first week of May.

April 15: Musical Grass: Learn how to make music using a blade of grass. Go out and look for a wide long blade of grass. Place your thumbs side by side with the blade of grass in the middle of them. Blow air through the thumbs making the space smaller or larger. The noise acts like a reed of an instrument, vibrating and making a sound.

April 16: What Was That: A Memory Game Using Natural Objects: Take some nature objects and put them on a bandana, have everyone try to remember everything that is on it. Take another bandana and cover it up. Then have everyone write down as many items they can remember.

April 17: Listen to Nature Sounds and Make a Sound Map: Bring your Nature Journal and sit outside. Listen close for the sounds of nature. See how many you can list, and draw a map of the location and what you heard. Then pick another spot and do the same.

April 18: Create A Home for a Fairy or an Elf: Look outside to see what a tiny elf would use for a table, bed, hat, blanket etc. Get a small box and put it inside. Decorate with markers, glued pictures. Set your decorated box outside and wait for your elf.

April 19: Magnifying Nature: Take a simple magnifying glass and go outside. Look between blades of grass, the bark of a tree, under rocks and logs, (make sure you put them back). Draw a picture of what you saw when you get home.

April 20: Mud Painting: Go outside make some mud in a container to be recycled. Get out some paintbrushes and paper. Use your mud to paint pictures.

April 21: Learn to Use Binoculars: Buy or borrow a pair of binoculars. Practice how to use them. Learn what 7X35 or 10X20 means. Learn how to use the focus dials. This way you will be ready to spot the migrant birds returning the first week of May!

April 22: Earth Day Crayon Muffins: Heat oven to 250 degrees. Fill up the cups of a muffin tin with small, peeled broken crayons. (Remove purple and black ones). Put tin in oven for 10 minutes. Watch till they soften. Remove from oven and cool. Once the crayons are cool to the touch, color on!

April 23: Shadow Fun: Go outside and take your chalk if it is sunny. Stand on a ground that someone can trace your shadow. Try to pose as an animal or plant. Step away and complete the picture adding flowers, eyes, etc.

April 24: Arbor Day: Make Friends with a Tree: Go outside and find a street tree on your block. Try to identify it. Look at the flowers, leaves and bark. With a piece of paper lay it on the bark, with your other hand take a crayon on rub it on the paper. Make a bark rubbing. Use different colors. Watch the flowers bud, leaves sprout. Give your tree a name and a hug.

April 25: Stick Name Art: Find a few twigs outside. Snap them into letters of your name and glue on a piece of cardboard (food box). Decorate with glitter, feathers etc. Have fun!

April 26: Sunflower Sunday: Get some potting soil, a pack of Sunflowers and some small planting pots. Fill up pots with soil and plant a three seeds an inch apart. Water and place in sun. When the seedling are about 6 inches, remove from pots and plant outside.

April 27: Rainbow Hike: Look at the colors on a rainbow. Make one to take along and go for a walk. Try to find something that matches with every color of the rainbow. Memorize the acronym ROYGBIV.

April 28: Go Birding with Binoculars: Go outside today and bring your binoculars. See if you can find a few birds. Bring your book or checklist. Practice finding them in your bird field guide or checklist.

April 29: Look at Flowers Up Close: Go outside and bring your magnifying glass and paper. Look closely at some spring flowers. How many petal? What do you see inside? Draw them on the paper. Learn the parts of the flower. (Petals, stem, stamen, anthers etc.)

April 30: Tree Hike: Talk a walk outside, bring your tape measure, binoculars, magnifying glass. Go visit your tree friend. Does it look different? Measure the circumference of a tree, look at its bark, and look at its buds. Are the buds open? Flowers or leaves? Insects walking up and down the trunk? Birds singing on branches? Record it in your nature journal.