

# kids summer NATURE kit

teaching your children the gifts nature has to give.



## What you'll find inside...

Why NATURE is good for YOU.  
[especially your kids]

Ideas to make SUMMER  
fun with NATURE in mind.

Activities to encourage learning

Crafts to inspire NATURALLY



Learn about: Wildlife . Make a bird bath . Flower fairy pots . Nightblooming magic . Sunflowers . Fun on a river walk . Butterflies . Summer Solstice Daisy chains . Nocturnal . Starry nights . Gems . Animal Tracks . Bird Nests . Clouds . Hummingbird Gardens . Nature Scavenger hunts . Make a kit to explore . Kites . Wind . Campouts . Friendships . Nature journals and more . .



# What you didn't know about NATURE

According to the National Wildlife Federation (NWF.org)

*In the last two decades, childhood has moved indoors. The average American boy or girl spends just four to seven minutes in unstructured outdoor play each day, and more than seven hours each day in front of an electronic screen.<sup>1,2,3</sup>*

*This shift inside profoundly impacts the wellness of our nation's kids. Childhood obesity rates have more than doubled the last 20 years; the United States has become the largest consumer of ADHD medications in the world; and pediatric prescriptions for antidepressants have risen precipitously.*

*Our kids are out of shape, tuned out and stressed out, because they're missing something essential to their health and development: connection to the natural world.*

## NATURE should be a big part of SUMMER



### Top REASONS to be OUTSIDE...

**Stronger bones and lower cancer risk:** Today's "indoor kids" don't get enough sun and are becoming Vitamin D deficient, causing health risks.

**Trimmer and more healthy kids:** An hour of play to ward off childhood obesity and diabetes.

**Improved eyesight:** Recent studies find that kids who get outdoor time have less need for eye glasses.

**Less depression and hyperactivity:** Outdoor time in natural setting (even tree-lined streets) soothes kids and lowers their need for medications.

**Longer attention spans:** Children who stare at TV and video games all day have less patience and shorter attention spans.

**Better at making friends:** Children playing together outdoors relate directly with one another, create games together and improve their "people" skills.

**More creative:** Outdoor kids are more likely to use their own imaginations, inventions and creativity while playing.

**Less "acting out":** Getting kids away from TV violence and video games helps them see that violent behavior does not always solve problems.

**Measurably better grades in school:** The healthy bodies and minds that come with outdoor play are better able to do well in school.

**A longer lifespan and healthier adult life:** Doctors estimate that sedentary and obese children lose three to five years from their life expectancy.



## Something to think about...

***think about this...when you were young---what memories do you hold dearest?*** Was it a family trip in a wild national park, a day at the beach catching sand crabs, maybe you enjoyed trying to catch fire flies, playing in a sand box, did you grab a net and try to catch the elusive monarch butterfly, maybe you just drew chalk drawings on your driveway, maybe you had a lemonade stand, maybe you could swing outside for hours, or what about a special lake trip you did every year as a kid?? There are moments that we hold dearest to our hearts that always took place in the outdoors. There is a magic there that holds our childhood spirit, it whispers to us and calls us to take the time to wander in the woods, to watch the winds sway the tall trees back and forth, to listen for a hummingbird, to marvel at a sunset. Nature holds so many keys to our inner happiness and we have forgotten the wonder it holds. So what are we doing squandering our children's youth? We are doing a dis-service to them and the world by not getting them outside, not allowing them to know the hidden secrets that nature holds.

*So, in the space below I would like to invite you to think about what you enjoyed most as a child & what gifts you would like to bestow upon your children that they can learn about the natural wonder nature has to offer:*

[illegible]

A photograph of two children, a boy and a girl, seen from behind, standing in a field of tall grass. The boy is on the left, wearing a light-colored striped shirt. The girl is on the right, wearing a grey hoodie, and has her arms outstretched towards the grass. The background is a soft-focus green field.

## OUTDOOR TIME FOR KIDS: THE SCIENCE

**1 Less Free Time:** During the last 30 years, the amount of children's free time has declined, in favor of more structured activities. For example, between 1981-1997, unstructured outdoor activities fell by 50%.

Study: Hofferth, Sandra and John Sandberg (1999), "Changes in American Children's Time, 1981-1997," University of Michigan Institute for Social Research. <http://www.puttingfamilyfirst.org/research.php>

**2 Outside Time vs. Inside Time:** Research shows that children are spending half as much time outside as they did 20 years ago – and much more time doing "inside" activities.

Study: Juster, F. Thomas et al. (2004). "Changing Times of American Youth: 1981-2003", Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Child Development Supplement

**3 Too Much Screen Time:** The average American child spends 44 hours per week (more than 6 hours a day!) staring at some kind of electronic screen.

Study: Rideout, Victoria et al. (2005). Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-Olds. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.

**4 Childhood Obesity:** The prevalence of obesity among children aged 6 to 11 more than doubled in the past 20 years, to 17 percent of children in this age group. The rate of clinically obese adolescents (aged 12-19) more than tripled, to 17.6 percent. The Centers for Disease Control concludes that a major missing ingredient is an hour per day of moderate physical activity.

Study: CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Division of Adolescent and School Health. Childhood Obesity. 20 Oct. 2008.

**5 Increased Use of Ritalin in Children:** In 2000, one out of every eight American children was taking Ritalin for treatment of behavioral disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Researchers hypothesized that an increase in television viewing, as well as greater academic pressure at an earlier age, was contributing to increased usage.

Study: Sax, Leonard, "Ritalin - Better Living Through Chemistry?" The World and I. Nov. 1, 2000. [http://www.dadi.org/rtl\\_n\\_sax.htm](http://www.dadi.org/rtl_n_sax.htm)

**6 Increased Use of Anti-Depressants in Children:** The use of anti-depressants in children grew between 1998 and 2002 from 1.6% to 2.4%, an adjusted annual increase of 9.2%. The growth in antidepressant use was greater among girls (a 68% increase) than among boys (a 34% increase.)

Study: Delate T, Gelenberg AJ, Simmons VA, Mothermal BR. (2004) "Trends in the use of antidepressant medications in a nationwide sample of commercially insured pediatric patients, 1998-2002." Psychiatric Services. 55(4):387-391. <http://www.ps.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/abstract/55/4/387>

**7 Surge in Childhood Obesity:** In the past 30 years, childhood obesity has more than tripled. The prevalence of obesity among children aged 6 to 11 years increased from 6.5% in 1980 to 19.6% in 2008. During the same time period, the prevalence of obesity among adolescents aged 12 to 19 years increased from 5.0% to 18.1%.

Study: CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Division of Adolescent and School Health. Childhood Obesity. 20 Oct. 2008. <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/obesity>

**8 Lack of Vitamin D and Health Issues:** Many children in the U.S., especially minorities, need more Vitamin D. Spending time outside raises levels of Vitamin D, protecting children from bone problems and other health issues.

Study: American Academy of Pediatrics. "Many Children have suboptimal Vitamin D Levels," Pediatrics. October 26, 2009. <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/oct2609studies.htm>

**9 Near-Sightedness:** In several studies reported in the journal Optometry and Vision Science, researchers found that kids who spent more time outside during the day tended to have better distance vision than those who favored indoor activities.

Study: What's Hot in Myopia Research-The 12th International Myopia Conference, Australia, July 2008

**10 Natural Settings and Cognitive Behavior:** Children who are exposed to natural or outdoor settings receive benefits to their cognitive health, such as reduction of ADHD symptoms.

Study: Wells, N.M. (2000). At Home with Nature: Effects of "greenness" on children's cognitive functioning. Environment and Behavior (32), 6, pp 775-795. <http://eab.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/32/6/775>

**11 School Performance:** Offering environmental education programs in school improves standardized test scores.

Study: Bartosh, Oksana. Environmental Education: Improving Student Achievement. Thesis. Evergreen State College, 2003. Web. [http://www.seer.org/pages/research/Bartosh 2003.pdf](http://www.seer.org/pages/research/Bartosh%202003.pdf).

**12 Critical Thinking:** Through environmental education offered in schools, students increase their critical thinking skills of performance on tests.

Study: Ernst, Julie (Athman) and Martha Monroe. "The effects of environment-based education on students' critical thinking skills and disposition toward critical thinking." 10.4 Environmental Education Research, Nov. 2004.

**13 Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder:** Researchers at University of Illinois report findings that indicate exposure to natural settings in the course of common after-school and weekend activities may be "widely effective" in reducing attention deficit symptoms in children.

Study: Kuo, PhD, Frances E., and Andrea Faber Taylor, PhD. "A Potential Natural Treatment for Attention- Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: Evidence From a National Study." American Journal of Public Health 94.9. Sept. 2004.

**14 Importance of Play:** Play protects children's emotional development; whereas a loss of free time in combination with a hurried lifestyle can be a source of stress, anxiety, and may even contribute to depression for many children.

Study: Ginsburg, MD, MSEd, Kenneth R., Committee on Communications, and Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health. "The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds." 119.1 (2007). American Academy of Pediatrics, Jan. 2007.

**15 Nature Makes You Nicer:** Increased time in nature makes one nicer, enhances social interactions and more.

Study: Weinstein, N., Przybylski, A. K., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). "Can nature make us more caring? Effects of immersion in nature on intrinsic aspirations and generosity." Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 35, 1315-1329.

**Something BIG to  
THINK about!**



## NATURE m a d e MOMENTS



## Ideas to help YOU & your KIDS get out into NATURE

**Create a kids NATURE KIT to help them explore & learn more OUTSIDE!**

**Kids LOVE surprises, so why don't you put together some of the following items and make it an adventure...the kit should include:**

- ☐ A magnifying glass to look for small bugs, to look closely at a flower, to see tiny details of the forest floor, the veins in a leaf, the textures of rocks, the colors of minerals, etc.
- ☐ Binoculars to help see things further away.
- ☐ A nature book to help identify local plants, animals, leaves, etc. OR you can always make a book of your own and leave spaces to paste leaves & identify them.  
[See the following pages for some generic fun things to include in a nature book]
- ☐ Sketch book and pencil to do leaf or rock rubbings, draw things that are found.
- ☐ Disposable camera
- ☐ Small bag for collecting feathers, fallen leaves, treasures

Put all the items in a sturdy backpack with a water bottle, sunblock, bug spray, chapstick

**NATURE**

# SCAVENGER ST.

**HUNT**

- ☐ Leaf
- ☐ Pine Cone
- ☐ Bark
- ☐ Pretty stick
- ☐ Pirate stick
- ☐ Long fairy grass
- ☐ Feather
- ☐ Berry bush
- ☐ Wild flower
- ☐ Heart shape rock

## Shapes

- ☐ Something CIRCLE
- ☐ Something SQUARE
- ☐ Something TRIANGLE

## Colors

- ☐ Something GREEN
- ☐ Something BROWN
- ☐ Something BLACK

## Touch

- ☐ Something rough
- ☐ Something smooth
- ☐ Something soft
- ☐ Something hard
- ☐ Water
- ☐ Long grass
- ☐ Feather

**NATURE**

# SCAVENGER ST.

**HUNT**

- ☐ Three petal leaf
- ☐ Large Pine Cone
- ☐ Bark
- ☐ Seed (helicopter)
- ☐ Dandelion
- ☐ Long fairy grass
- ☐ Feather
- ☐ Berry bush
- ☐ Wild flower
- ☐ Heart shape rock

## Shapes

- ☐ Something heart shaped
- ☐ Something Oval
- ☐ Something Moon shaped

## Colors

- ☐ Something Red
- ☐ Something White
- ☐ Something Orange

## Touch

- ☐ Something rough
- ☐ Something smooth
- ☐ Something soft
- ☐ Something hard
- ☐ Water
- ☐ Long grass
- ☐ Feather

# NATURE

## My nature study

For the day of: \_\_\_\_\_

Today I saw... \_\_\_\_\_

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I felt... \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite part of today... \_\_\_\_\_

I want to learn more about... \_\_\_\_\_

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# NATURE

## My nature study

For the day of: \_\_\_\_\_

Today I saw... \_\_\_\_\_

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I felt... \_\_\_\_\_

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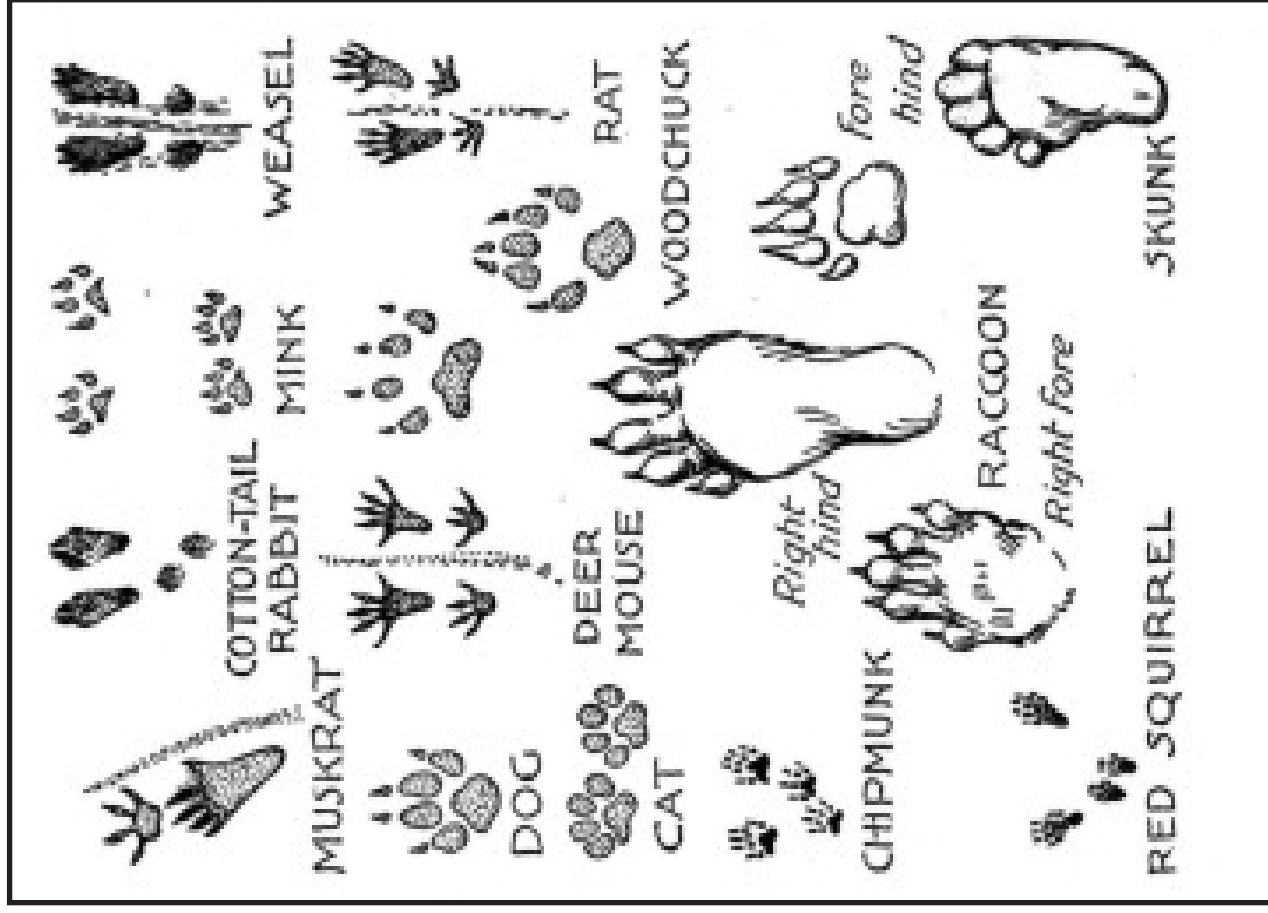
# 100 Things to Do This Summer














- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> bowling          | <input type="checkbox"/> meteor showers   | <input type="checkbox"/> magic show      | <input type="checkbox"/> visit grandparents   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> beach            | <input type="checkbox"/> wagon ride       | <input type="checkbox"/> ride bikes      | <input type="checkbox"/> breakfast for dinner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> zoo              | <input type="checkbox"/> origami          | <input type="checkbox"/> potato stamps   | <input type="checkbox"/> flashcards           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fishing          | <input type="checkbox"/> photo booth      | <input type="checkbox"/> science day     | <input type="checkbox"/> cookies for friends  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> blow bubbles     | <input type="checkbox"/> bean bag toss    | <input type="checkbox"/> farmer's market | <input type="checkbox"/> cereal necklace      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> make lemonade    | <input type="checkbox"/> croquet          | <input type="checkbox"/> flea market     | <input type="checkbox"/> new playground       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> finger paint     | <input type="checkbox"/> badminton        | <input type="checkbox"/> frisbee         | <input type="checkbox"/> homemade pasta       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> water fight      | <input type="checkbox"/> lizard shop      | <input type="checkbox"/> relays          | <input type="checkbox"/> bbq w/friends        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> make popsicles   | <input type="checkbox"/> ball pit         | <input type="checkbox"/> art project     | <input type="checkbox"/> handprint art        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> treasure hunt    | <input type="checkbox"/> box cars         | <input type="checkbox"/> feed ducks      | <input type="checkbox"/> tour fire station    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> swim             | <input type="checkbox"/> "drive in movie" | <input type="checkbox"/> watercolor      | <input type="checkbox"/> play tennis          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> piñata           | <input type="checkbox"/> hopscotch        | <input type="checkbox"/> make cards      | <input type="checkbox"/> sleep in tent        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bird watching    | <input type="checkbox"/> picnic           | <input type="checkbox"/> movie night     | <input type="checkbox"/> twister              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> reading party    | <input type="checkbox"/> kids plan dinner | <input type="checkbox"/> soccer          | <input type="checkbox"/> play post office     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dollar movies    | <input type="checkbox"/> fireworks        | <input type="checkbox"/> pillow fort     | <input type="checkbox"/> build with tools     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> peculiar P Party | <input type="checkbox"/> parade           | <input type="checkbox"/> 3-legged race   | <input type="checkbox"/> craft night          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> telescope        | <input type="checkbox"/> obstacle course  | <input type="checkbox"/> caramel popcorn | <input type="checkbox"/> pillow fight         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> splash park      | <input type="checkbox"/> game night       | <input type="checkbox"/> pull taffy      | <input type="checkbox"/> block tower          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cookout          | <input type="checkbox"/> catch bugs       | <input type="checkbox"/> make a movie    | <input type="checkbox"/> card games           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hike             | <input type="checkbox"/> fly kites        | <input type="checkbox"/> mini golf       | <input type="checkbox"/> factory tour         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> nature center    | <input type="checkbox"/> make shirts      | <input type="checkbox"/> sprinklers      | <input type="checkbox"/> make pizza           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> planetarium      | <input type="checkbox"/> paper airplanes  | <input type="checkbox"/> apple sauce     | <input type="checkbox"/> dress-ups            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> make ice cream   | <input type="checkbox"/> play dough       | <input type="checkbox"/> sandcastle      | <input type="checkbox"/> service project      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> visit a farm     | <input type="checkbox"/> library          | <input type="checkbox"/> model plane     | <input type="checkbox"/> balloon animals      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sidewalk chalk   | <input type="checkbox"/> write a book     | <input type="checkbox"/> make robot      | <input type="checkbox"/> aquatic center       |

# What do you want to do this SUMMER?
















[illegible]This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# ANIMAL TRACKS



| Guide To Animal Tracks   |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
|    | WHITE-TAILED DEER<br>2 1/2" to 3" |
|     | MOOSE<br>4 1/2" to 5 1/2"         |
|    | DOG - 2 1/4" to 4"                |
|     | COYOTE<br>H - 2 1/4" F - 2 1/2"   |
|    | RED FOX<br>H - 2" F - 2 1/4"      |
|     | GRAY FOX<br>H - 1 3/4" F - 2"     |
|    | BOBCAT - 1 7/8"                   |
|     | LYNX<br>H - 3" F - 4 1/4"         |
|   | HOUSE CAT - 1 to 2"               |
|    | OTTER - 1 1/2"                    |
|  | FISHER - 2 1/4"                   |
|   | MINK - 1"                         |
|  | WEASEL - 1/2" to 1"               |

|   |  |
|---|--|
|    | RACCOON<br>H - 4" F - 2 1/2"           |
|    | STRIPED SKUNK<br>H - 2" F - 2"         |
|    | PORCUPINE<br>H - 3 1/4" F - 2 3/4"     |
|    | BEAVER<br>H - 6" F - 3"                |
|    | BLACK BEAR<br>H - 7" F - 4 1/2"        |
|    | OPOSSUM<br>H - 2" F - 1 1/4"           |
|    | WOODCHUCK<br>H - 2 1/4" F - 2"         |
|    | MUSKRAT<br>H - 2 1/2" F - 1 1/2"       |
|    | SNOWSHOE HARE<br>H - 5" F - 2"         |
|    | COTTONTAIL RABBIT<br>H - 3 1/2" F - 1" |
|  | GRAY SQUIRREL<br>H - 2 1/4" F - 1 1/2" |
|  | WHITE-FOOTED MOUSE - 1/4" T            |
|  | CROW - 2 1/2"                          |
|  | TURKEY - 4"                            |
|  | RUFFED GROUSE - 2"                     |

## TRACKS NOT TO SCALE

Depending on the substrate (snow, mud, dust, sand, etc.) and the speed the animal was moving, tracks may show great variability in their appearance.

F - Front track  
H - Hind track  
T - Tail marks may be present

# Ideas to help YOU & your KIDS get out into NATURE

## Learn about Wildlife:

**Track animals:** use the sheet above that has a listing of different animals and their tracks. If you have different animals in your area--google & make a list of what you'd like to find.

**How should animals be treated:** Talk about respect and love for God's creatures. From a small ant to birds, to animals in far away lands.

**Take a river walk:** What do you see? water bugs, ducks, birds, fish, plants, moss...what do you hear?

**Learn how animals help people:** Have your children name some of the ways we use animals... They provide us with food, from milk to eggs, meat. We turn their hair and hide into clothing. Then teach them about how wild animals also help us--how we need butterflies and bees to pollinate plants. How we need earth worms to help make our soil fertile to grow crops. Some insects help farmers eat destructive bugs to save their crops. Ladybugs, ground beetles are great protectors for your own yard. Birds, frogs and toads are also great at eating destructive bugs.

### A fun activity for this idea:

Go see a great educational movie about animal migrations like "Flight of the Butterfly" and then purchase a butterfly kit & raise your own butterflies and let them go.

**Movie link:** <http://www.flightofthebutterflies.com/>

**Butterfly kit:** Amazon link to this kit: [http://www.amazon.com/Insect-Lore-Live-Butterfly-Garden/dp/B00000ISC5/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1370531091&sr=8-1&keywords=Butterfly+kit](http://www.amazon.com/Insect-Lore-Live-Butterfly-Garden/dp/B00000ISC5/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1370531091&sr=8-1&keywords=Butterfly+kit) [my family did this butterfly kit and it was a great learning experience. Highly recommend it]

There are also other bug kits that your family may enjoy: they have a 'Ladybug Land' or Praying Mantis or an ant hill and more...

**Learn about nocturnal animals:** Take a night & go outside & ask your kids 'What can you see at night?' Then guide them outside & see if you can see any bats flying over head, hear an owl in the distance...

**A fun activity for this idea:** purchase an owl pellet kit & have your family gather round while you discover what lies within.

**Owl Pellet Kit:** [http://www.amazon.com/MHB-P4K-Student-Owl-Pellet/dp/B0021H0DZW/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1370702636&sr=8-2&keywords=owl+pellets](http://www.amazon.com/MHB-P4K-Student-Owl-Pellet/dp/B0021H0DZW/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1370702636&sr=8-2&keywords=owl+pellets)

**How do animals tell the weather?:** Interesting article that shows how animals use their senses to predict weather. <http://science.howstuffworks.com/nature/climate-weather/storms/animals-predict-weather.htm>

# Ideas to help YOU & your KIDS get out into NATURE

## Wildlife sanctuary:

**Visit a local wildlife sanctuary in your area:** They usually help you get a good taste of learning about nature and teaching children to want to naturally protect it & how to do it.

**Create a sanctuary within your yard:** you can do little things to make a safe place for animals to live and wander through your yard. Here are a few ideas & then you can take some time to learn more on your own...provide water for nearby animals (make a birdbath or make sure one is always full of fresh, clean water), make a bird feeder or birdhouse for your yard, you can even scatter seeds like sunflower or millet to make food more accessible.

Here is a great link by TLC on creating a backyard wildlife sanctuary: <http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/family/environmental-activities3.htm>

**A fun activity for this idea:** Build a easy bird bath for your yard. Here are some images and ideas



## Do a little birding:

**Do some bird watching:** get your binoculars out, take some photos and then go online to find out what kinds of birds you have in your backyard or neighborhood.

**Listen to a birds song:** can you figure out what kind of bird it is? you can go online & listen. Go to this link to learn more: <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/page.aspx?pid=1059>

**Feed the birds:** find a good spot in your yard to scatter bird seed & then you can make birdfeeders with pinecones, peanut butter and bird seed, attach some string & hang them everywhere.

**What about ducks?** go to a local pond and take along some old bread, then go home and read the sweet tale of "The Ugly Duckling"--make it a memorable teaching moment.

**Nesting:** How & why do birds make a nest? Teach your kids about the different types of nests--some birds build their nests in burrows in the ground, hummingbirds make them out of spider webbing & magpie's use giant sticks.

**A fun activity for this idea:** Build a nest out of a paper bag or candy. Here are some ideas.



# Ideas to help YOU & your KIDS get out into NATURE

## Flower Power

**Create a Fairy or Nome Flower Pot:** have your children pick out some whimsical flowers, a fun pot to plant them in, add acorn tops for bowls, walnut shell beds, leaf hammocks, etc.



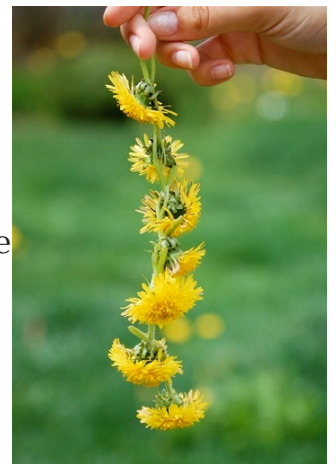
**Plant a night blooming flower:** Have a special night(s) where you gather your family under the stars to see the evening flower bloom, watch stars, have a night picnic and make it a special night. Some of the most popular flowers are the Primrose, Moonflower & Cereus Cactus

**Grow a giant Sunflower:** Grow a giant sunflower and then enjoy the wonderful seeds they produce, cook them up, enjoy them all together while you talk about things that make you HAPPY. Sunflowers usually need a giant stake to help them grow, so another fun idea would be to decorate the stake with everyone's name or doodles or write down things that make you smile. Here is a link on *how to grow a sunflower in a pot*: <http://www.wikihow.com/Grow-a-Sunflower-in-a-Pot>

Link to *make roasted salted sunflower seeds*: <http://www.food.com/recipe/roasted-salted-sunflower-seed-98828>

**Make a flower chain:** Have you ever wanted to make a chain with flowers, here is a great link on how to make a daisy chain <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Daisy-Chain>

I am not generally about picking flowers & watching them wilt & die, but if you create a loving, nurturing memory with your child, they will always have the sweet moments of making a daisy or dande chain together. Dandelion's are my flower of choice because people generally would like to get rid of them any way, so there is no harm done. Pick the flowers with love, make them into bracelets, crowns, take pictures & have the memories forever.

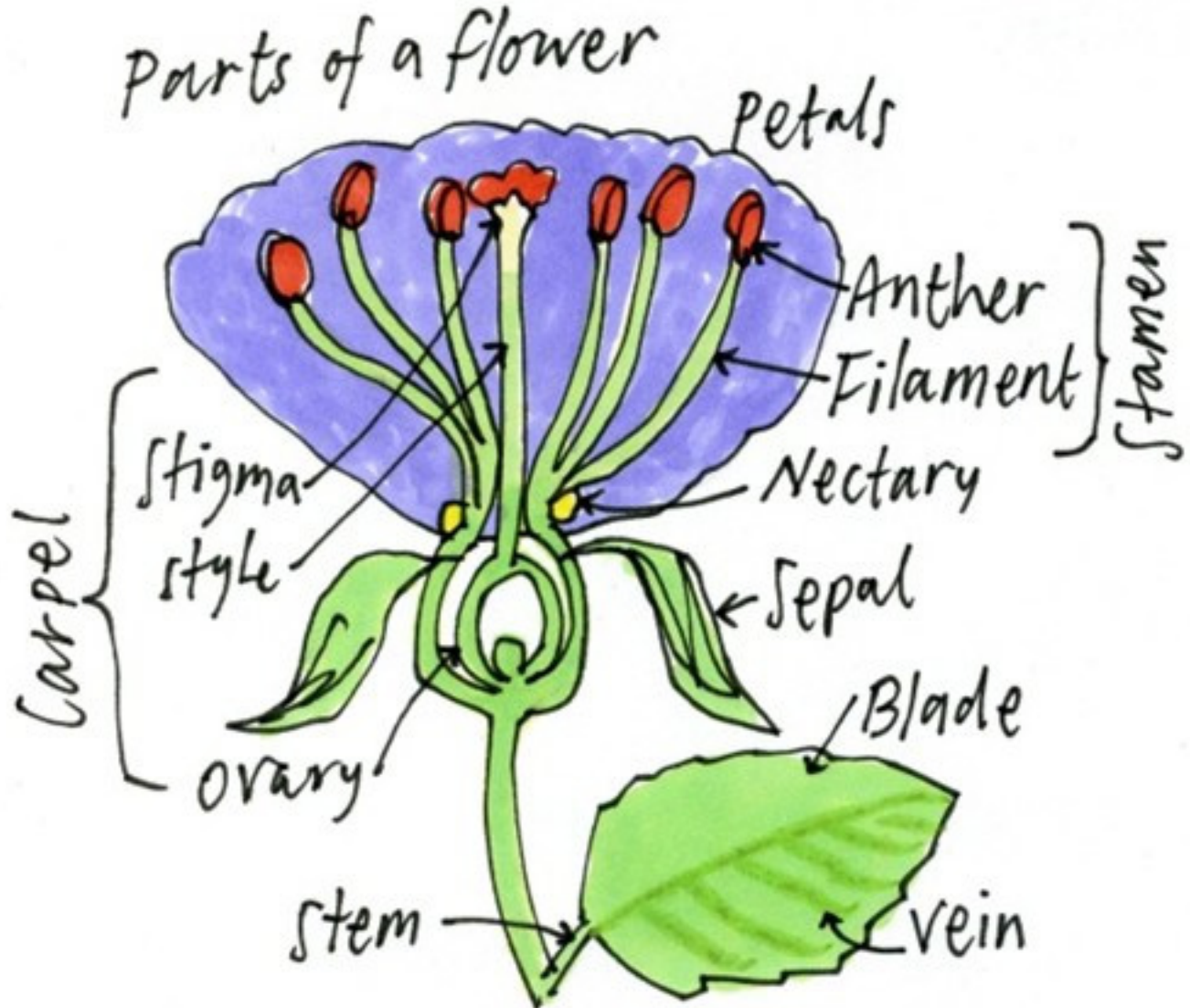


***"A weed is but an unloved flower." -Ella Wheeler Wilcox***

# Ideas to help YOU & your KIDS get out into NATURE

## Flower Power

*Learn about the different parts of a plant & how they grow:* use the following activity to help.



Then get out some creative paper & make your own flowers. There are many types, so go online & find one appropriate for your kids. Have fun!



# Ideas to help YOU & your KIDS get out into NATURE

## More FUN ideas to get you OUTSIDE

**Learn about constellations:** I bought our daughter the book “The Night Sky” which is a child’s introduction to the story of the stars, planets and constellations. There is also another book called “Zoo in the Sky” which is a book of animal constellations. Grab some big pillows, a blanket and make it a night to remember.

**Do some cloud watching:** This is always a favorite for any kid. Lay outside and watch the shapes come and go. Yell out & point out the cloud shapes to one another to share your findings.

**Have a backyard campout:** Put up your tent, bring out the sleeping bags, have the lantern ready, make a fire in the fire pit & make the evening a full-on campout. If possible make cowboy dinners in the fire pit, so you get a real feel for eating under the stars. Tell camp stories, sing some songs, share favorite memories, all in the comfort of your own backyard.

**Summer Solstice Party:** Have a celebration for SUMMER!! Get outside and swim, have a picnic, play in the sun all day, give your kids a summer kit filled with water guns, chalk, a towel, sun-block, sunkist orange, a new swimsuit, etc.

**Chalk Art Show:** give your kids some chalk and spend a few hours creating original works or art & then showcase each one with having each family member explain their piece, have them name it & then take a picture of it. Make it a memorabel occasion. Then have everyone write in chalk “what summer means to me.”

**Try something new:** there are so many activities to do outside, but we often dont ever even try them. Give your family a challenge & try something new this summer---once a month, each week, give each member something they want to try & then spend the summer doing it. Get outside and kayak, mountain climb, go hiking, surf, scuba dive, snorkel, rollerblade, paddle board, long board, unicycle, zip line, hot air balloon, go boating, just find new places to go on walk... the list is endless with possibilities to get you outdoors. Have fun!! Try something new.

**ASK your FAMILY what they are excited about or want to do this summer.** Make a bucket list of things to do outdoors, to learn about nature, to appreciate & value the beauty around us. here are a few more ideas...Go on a local hike . Learn about gemstones & where birth stones originated . learn how animals stay warm in the winter or why they hibernate . Learn about insects . Learn about endangered species . build a bird house . Find a waterfall . Learn about honeybees & visit a farmer who has a hive . Learn about herbs, grow some & then make a great salad with them . Make home made lemonade . Learn about edible plants . Learn about the eyes of a dragon fly---what do they see? . Learn about the speed of a hummingbirds wings & then create a place for nectar & watch the hummingbirds come . Take a walk in the rain . Make paper or leaf boats & race them down a small stream . Go on a night hike . Make your own family scavenger hunt of things you would like to find or see over the summer & check them off.



The above image was created by a nature artist Andy Goldsworthy. I just came across his work & was so moved by it that I would like to share it with you.

Take a day & get outside & try to re-create something he has envisioned or come up with your own natural art piece. There is so much beauty all around & we often miss it. Stop. Look. Listen and your inspiration will be set free. Create. Be Inspired. INSPIRE your family.

Take a day & find a place with your family where you can sit under a tree, look around you...notice things, you can feel the smooth texture of a rock, you can walk barefoot in the grass, you can be inspired by the colors nature holds. Nature has many gifts waiting to give you, but you must take a moment to notice, you must share with your child the art that is held within the details of a leaf, the texture of a rock, the light that spins the many hues. There are lessons held and whispered throughout the forest floor...listen and you will be changed. Give this gift to those you love. Best wishes on your journey to teach your children about something truly priceless...

-Love & best wishes for you. Heather

# Paint rocks!

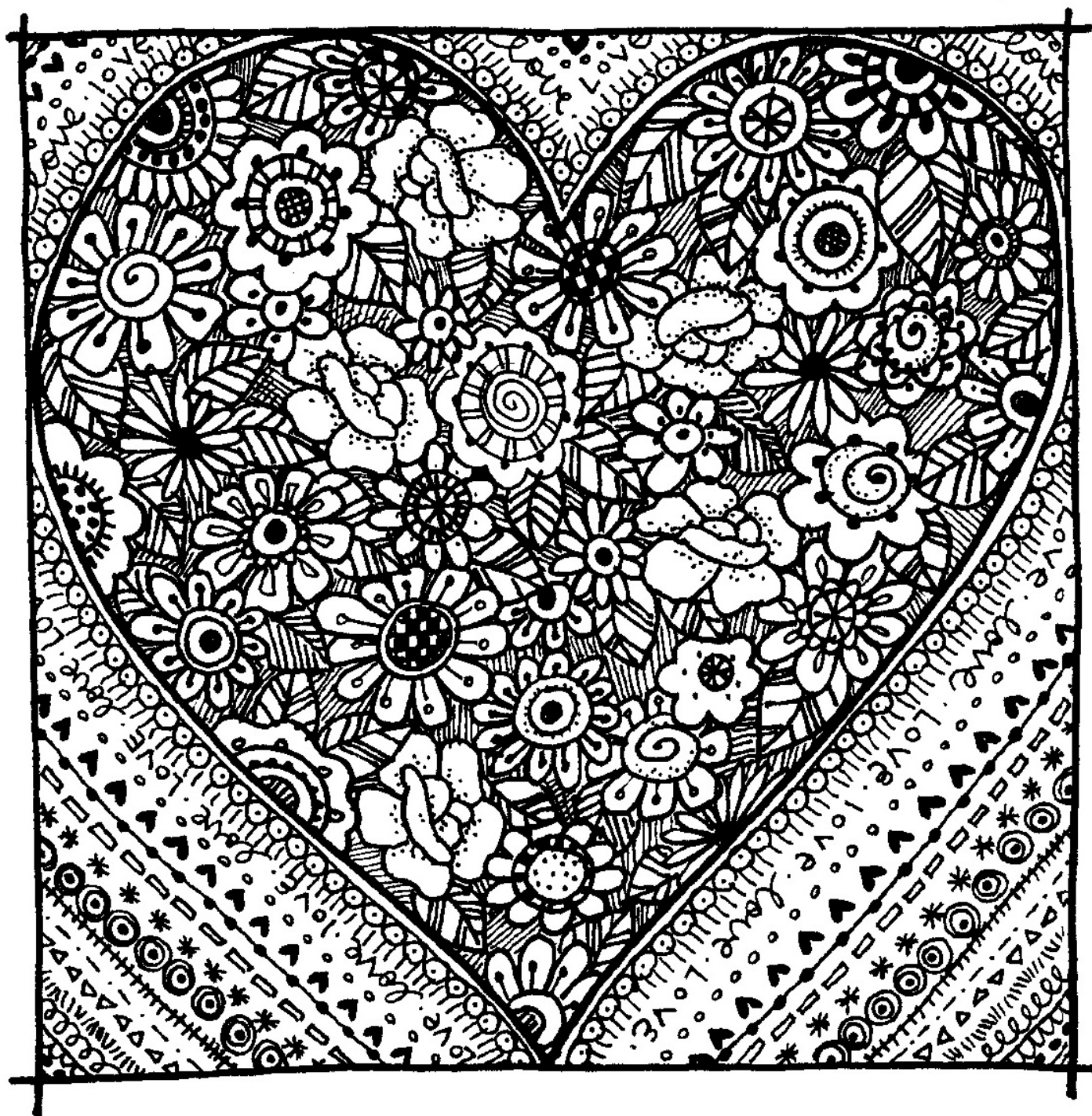
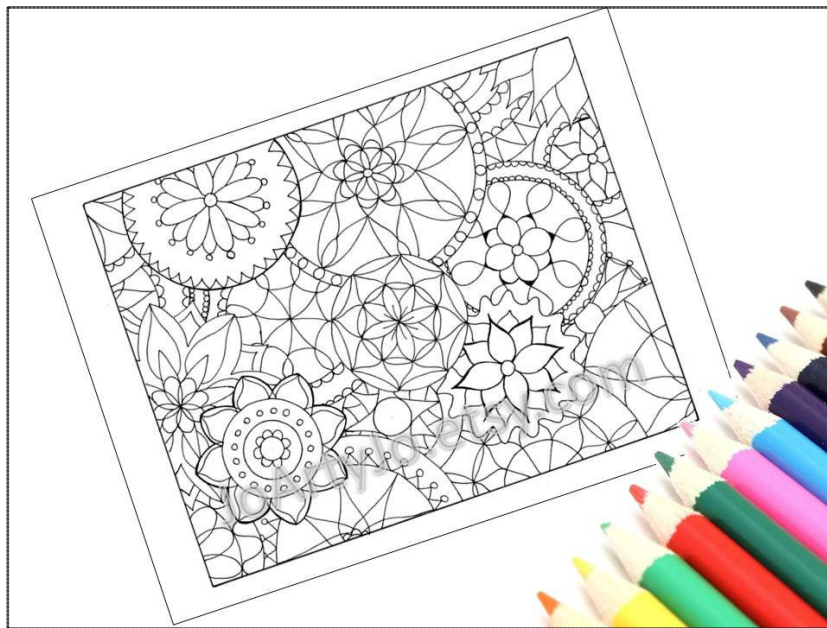
Have you ever painted rocks? This is the summer to do it...get creative. Here are some fun ideas to get you started.

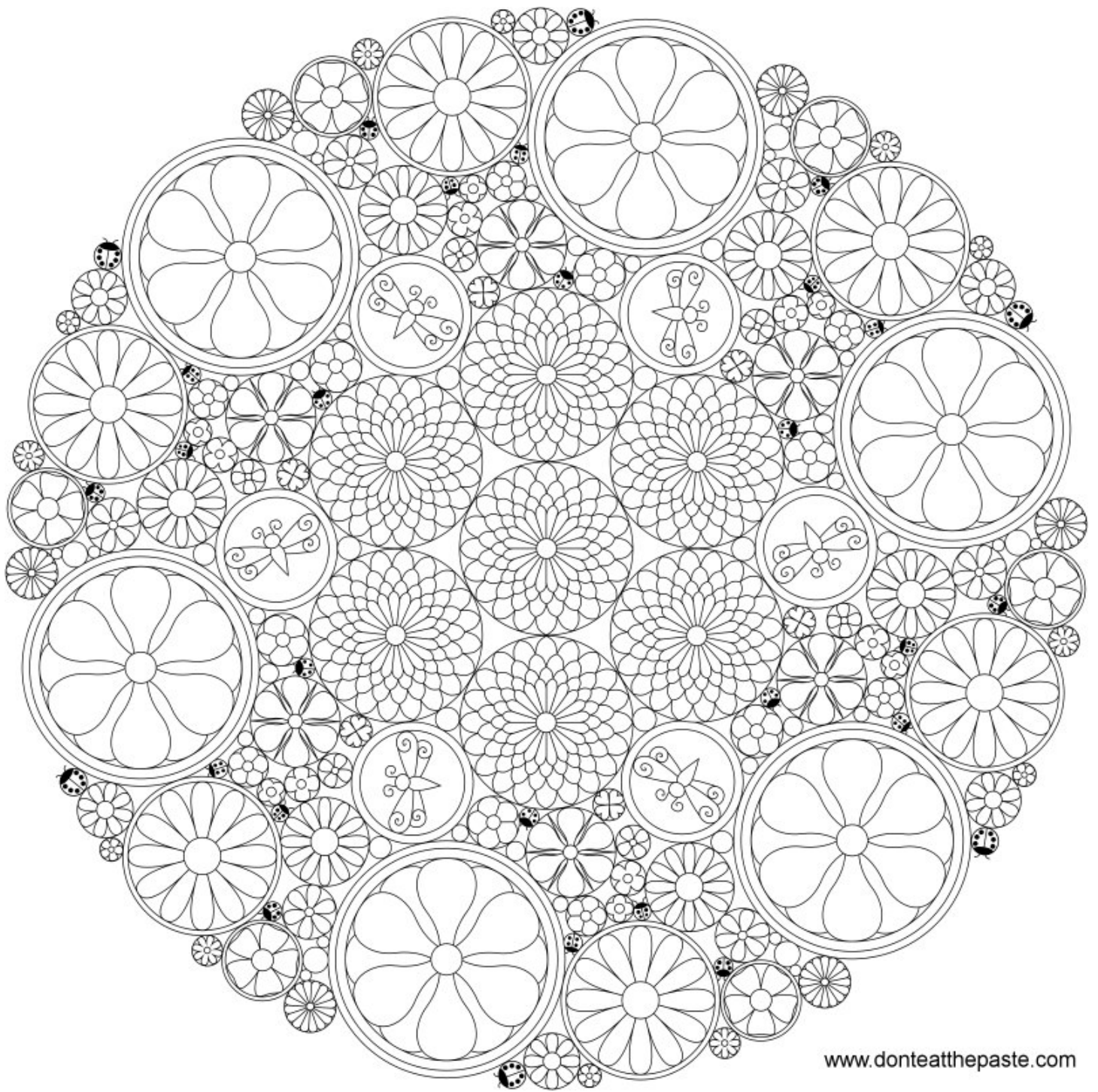
You could make birds, owls, fish, people, designs, hearts, flowers... anything your heart desires.



# Mandelas

Mandelas are a good way to allow children & adults to relax & get lost in the art of coloring. Take a day outside, lay on a blanket & just color...get lost in the colors, the small details & allow your mind to let go.







## SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Remember: everything is like a circle. It goes around and around, so teach your kids to be gentle & the world will be a little more gentle. Teach your children to be kind & the world will be a little more kind. Teach your children to understand that everything they do good, bad, happy, sad, affects the world in some small way. If we can show our children the importance of the natural world, they will have a greater appreciation for it.

If we allow one child to throw their wrapper into a small stream to watch it go down river...how many wrappers will end up there? If we don't teach our children...who will? Our world, their future is too priceless to not care or to not take the time to teach them some simple lessons that nature holds.

**“Come forth into the light of things, let nature be your teacher.” -William Wordsworth**

# Some Additional Reads & Links

**15 minutes Outside by Rebecca P. Cohen:** The book is broken down by month and lists hundreds of creative and fun outdoor activities. The ideas are endless and inspiring: from making ice sculptures in the winter to discovering a natural obstacle course in the spring, from playing “faucet tag” in the summer to making rock art in the fall.

**I Love Dirt by Jennifer Ward:** 52 activities to help you and your kids discover the wonders of nature

**No time for flash cards blog:** 50 simple outdoor activities for kids

<http://www.notimeforflashcards.com/2012/03/50-simple-outdoor-activities-for-kids.html>

**How to make a tent for your kids for the outdoors:**

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_12047337\\_make-tent-kids-outdoors.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_12047337_make-tent-kids-outdoors.html)

**Here are some pinterest links for Nature for Kids**

<http://pinterest.com/wildlife4kids/nature-for-kids/>

**National Wildlife Foundation: Connecting Kids & Nature**

<http://www.nwf.org/What-We-Do/Kids-and-Nature.aspx>

**ForestFoundation.org**

Additional nature activities for families

<http://www.forestfoundation.org/family-activities-in-nature>

**Nature activities for Children:** good link to additional resources & ideas

<http://www.outdoor-nature-child.com/>

I thank you God for this most  
amazing day, for the leaping  
greenly spirits of trees, and  
for the blue dream of sky and  
for everything which is  
natural, which is infinite,  
which is yes.

e. e. cummings

