



Friends of NCTC Program Activity
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Wildflower Wonders

(ages 5 and older)

Background (natural history)

There's no better time than spring to go looking for wildflowers! In the West Virginia Eastern Panhandle, organized wildflower walks may be offered at nature preserves or along the C&O Canal National Park. National Wildlife Refuges, nature centers, state parks, and national parks may also offer walks or wildflower festivals so check in your own area for opportunities. The activities in this program involve dirt, so enjoy the experience!

What You Will Need for These Activities

- Clean jar or plastic container
- Clear plastic
- One sheet of clear adhesive-backed plastic
- Scissors
- A large flower like a tulip or similar
- Seeds like Calendula, Cornflower, Poppy or Marigold
- Sterile compost or potting soil
- Tall thin dried flowers
- Ball-point pen
- Brown wrapping paper
- Magnifying glass

Things to Do

Go Looking for Wildflowers.

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Research what wildflowers are common in your area. Don't forget that wildflowers are not just found on the ground! Many trees develop flowers or catkins (a long slim flower with no petals) so be on the lookout for these. A wildflower field guide can be very helpful.

As tempting as it might be to pick the wildflowers you find, remember that other people will enjoy seeing them, too, so please don't pick them. You can get wildflower seeds at a garden center and grow your own. You'll find instructions below.

Grow a Surprise Garden

What you will need to get started

- A rainy day and Sneakers that you don't mind getting dirty
- Clean jar or plastic container
- Sterile compost or potting soil
- A tray for spreading out your soil
- Clear plastic
- A warm place

Step 1

Put on your sneakers and take a walk after rain. It doesn't matter where you go, as long as it's muddy.

Step 2

- a. Scrape the mud from your sneakers when you get home and put it in a clean jar or plastic container.
- b. Mix enough water with the mud to make it runny and leave the mixture to soak overnight.

Step 3

- a. Add sterile compost or potting soil from a garden center to the mud and water mixture so that the soil is not runny.
- b. Cover the tray with a sheet of clear plastic and store it in a warm place with light.

Step 4

The seedlings will begin to grow after two to three weeks. As they get larger, carefully move them to bigger pots so you can watch them grow to full size.

Can you identify all the plants?

<https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/kids/activities/surprisegarden.shtml>

Make a Seed Bomb! (and plant it)

First, decide on the type of seeds you want for your seed bomb. Calendula, Cornflower, Poppy and Marigold seeds are all good seeds to use. You can find packages of them at garden centers and the picture on the package can help you decide which ones you like.

To make the seed bomb: Tear up some brown wrapping paper or newspaper into small pieces and soak them in a bowl of water, stirring until the paper is totally wet. You can squash the paper with your hands to break it up a little.

Once the paper is mushy and completely soaked, flatten a piece in your hand. Sprinkle some of your chosen seeds on the paper. Then cover the seeds with more wet paper and roll into a ball.

Squeeze out as much water as you can. The drier you get the ball the quicker it will be ready to dry. Leave the paper ball to dry for a couple of days. Then you can 'plant' the seed bomb in an area of your yard where you think flowers are needed. You can even put one in a flower pot at your front door!

It takes around 4-6 weeks for most seeds to begin to grow, but they will grow quickly once you see the seedlings. Try to water them if it doesn't rain soon after planting. Most annual flowers like poor soil, so you don't need to worry about feeding them. Watch and see where the flowers grow best!

<https://growinghealthykids.co.uk/wildflower-activities/>

Make a Wildflower Bookmark to Remember and to Give Away!

What you will need to get started

- Tall thin dried flowers
- One sheet of clear adhesive-backed plastic
- Ball-point pen
- Scissors

Note: to press and dry flowers so that they are suitable for this project, place them on watercolor paper or card stock. If you have more than one flower, lay them flat and don't overlap. Place a piece of parchment paper on top of flowers and place a heavy book (or two) on them. It may take several days (even up to a month!) for them to dry thoroughly. Flowers with naturally flat faces are the easiest to press.

Step 1

- a. Cut two pieces of the plastic; make them a little bigger than you need the bookmark to be.
- b. Peel the backing off one piece and lay it sticky side up on a flat surface.

Step 2

- Lay the pressed flower carefully on the sticky plastic.
- Peel the backing off the other cut piece and lay it carefully on top of the flower. The two pieces do not need to match up exactly.

Step 3

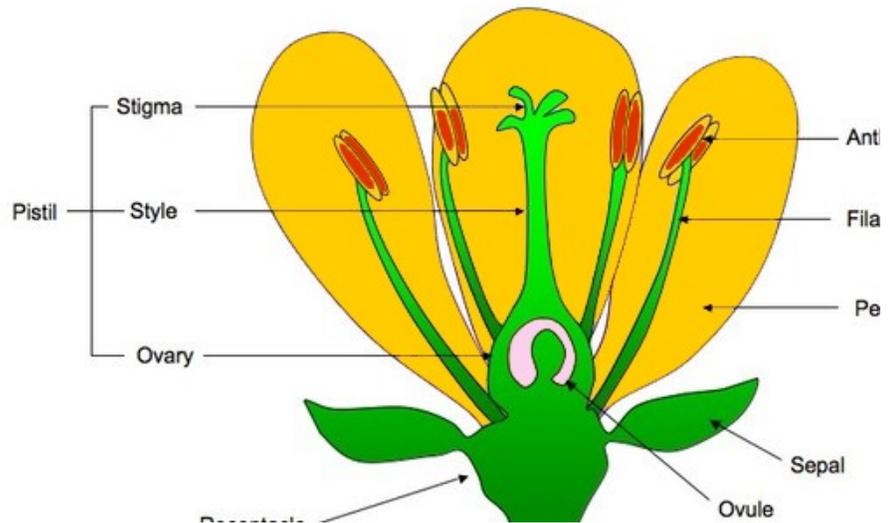
- Draw the outline of the bookmark onto the plastic with a ball-point pen and cut around it through both layers of plastic.
- The flower will show clearly from both sides of the bookmark.

<https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/kids/activities/bookmark.shtml>

Dissect a flower

Have you ever wondered what all the parts of a flower look like? Tulips are a good choice because they have large parts and can be taken apart carefully by hand with no need for a knife. You will need a clean surface for your dissection and a large piece of light-colored paper will help you see the parts more easily.

Carefully pull the petals of the flower off, then the inner parts (stamen, pistil), and the leaves. You can split the stem in half as well. Using a magnifying glass, you can look carefully at all the parts of the flower. Can you identify all the parts?



K8schoollessons.com

Helpful Hints for Adults (books to read, other websites, links)

The activities in this program are designed to help children discover wildflowers, but you may be willing to help them do even more, such as creating a butterfly garden in your yard. A good website is:

<https://nababutterfly.com/start-butterfly-garden/>

Books:

Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers (Kathi Appelt)

Jack's Garden (Henry Cole)

Miss Rumphius (Barbara Cooney)

Golden Nature Guide: Flowers