



Nature Play: Identifying Plants

What Plants Live Here?

Making rubbings of the veins and leaf edges of plants can be a great way for children to explore shapes and colors, make observations, and discover that plants come in many shapes and sizes. By exploring the shapes and vein patterns of leaves children can begin to understand what makes different plants unique and use those observations to identify plants in the future.

Leaf rubbings can be displayed as art or bound together to make a book they can use to identify plants next time they see them. Knowing what the plants are can also tell you a story about the area: is it wet, or dry? Sunny or shady? Did someone plant it, or did it show up on its own?

Guiding Questions: What kinds of plants do we see? What is the same/different between them? Have you seen any of these before? How can you identify them next time we see them?

NOTE for Grownups: it is fun to do these activities with your children, but remember when they (not you) lead the activity they learn problem-solving skills and gain confidence.

Materials: leaves collected from your yard or a walk through your neighborhood, medium or light weight paper, crayon/charcoal/pencil or similar. Optional materials: tape, magnifying glasses, plant identification guidebooks

To make a leaf rubbing:

- Collect leaves that attract your attention. Look for as many different shapes as possible. If you take them off a living plant, be careful to only take one or two leaves, and not the whole plant so that it has a chance to keep growing.
- Place one of the leaves vein side up on a table or other hard smooth surface. Putting a small strip of tape on the stem can help hold the leaf in place.
- Place a sheet of paper over the leaf (recycled office paper works well) and rub the side of a crayon or edge of a pencil over the leaf. The edges and veins will stand out darker than the other parts of the leaf or background.
- Repeat the process with as many leaves and/or colors of crayons as you wish.
- How else can you make leaf prints? Other people have used paint or foil.
- What can you do with your rubbings when you are done? To make a field guide, write the name of the type of leaf on the rubbing, and bind it into a book.

For more ideas:

sturdyforcommonthings.com/2015/09/tree-identification-for-kids-my-leaf-book/
firstpalette.com/craft/leaf-rubbings.html
kcedventures.com/blog/art-and-science-of-leaf-rubbings-nature-activity
darcyandbrian.com/nature-science-simple-leaf-rubbings-for-kids/
thebestideasforkids.com/leaf-painting/
campladybug.wordpress.com/2011/08/19/leaf-rubbings/
<https://www.makeandtakes.com/crayon-resist-autumn-leaf-rubbings>

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Plant Rubbing Images from the Web

