

# Backyard Flowers:

## A Practice in Nature Observation and Creative Writing

In this program we will be learning about the basics of plant observation and identification by looking at what is blooming in our backyards. This is an easy way to start learning about the plants that surround us and ways that we can start to know and name them.

Approximate program time: 40 minutes

This program consists of:

- Watching the backyard flowers Identification video.
- A backyard flower identification page. This consists of pictures and some basic ID information on the flowers discussed. Feel free to add to this with other flowers and plants you find!
- A nature journaling prompt that focuses on:
  - Nature observation. Noticing and documenting what you are seeing, feeling, smelling, etc. This will include a plant study on a chosen plant.
  - Nature writing prompt. This is to get your writing creativity flowing on what you are experiencing and observing.

At the end of all of this, we would love to see what you discover and create! In hopes to create a sense of community during this time of social separation, we want to create a Backyard Flowers class PDF. This will include all the drawings, observations and writings sent in by those who have participated. If you care to include your work or want an emailed copy of the final PDF, please contact me at [AmeriCorps@clarkambition.org](mailto:AmeriCorps@clarkambition.org). Thank you and I'm very excited to see what you do!

Other resources to use beyond this program:

### Plant ID Apps:

- iNaturalist
- PlantSnap
- LeafSnap

### Websites:

- Nature journaling PDF:
  - <https://www.cnps.org/education/students/parents-teachers/nature-journaling-curriculum-request>

## Backyard Flower Identification Sheet

- Purple Dead Nettle



- Leaves are hairy, spade shaped, and shade from green at the bottom to purple at the top.
- Flowers are bright red purple with a top hood lobe, two lower lip petals and a bottom fang like petal.
- Pollinated by bees.
- Mint family

- Chickweed



- Leaves are oval and opposite to each other.
- The flowers are small and white with 5 deeply lobed petals.
- Stalks have a single line of tiny hairs on it.
- Common in lawns, open spaces and disturbed areas.

- Common Blue Violet



- Flowers consist of 5 petals that can consist of many different shades of purple and even white.
- Flowers grow on their own separate stalk.
- Leaves are heart shaped.
- Member of the Violaceae family.
- Commonly found in yards and lawns.

- Dandelion



- Member of the Aster family.
- Vital source of nectar for early pollinators.
- Leaves are long, simply and lobed.
- Flower is yellow and made up of many tiny florets.
- Flowers mature into spherical seed heads.

- Spring Beauty



- Member of the Montiaceae family.
- The flower consists of 5 white to pink petals with pink stripes.
- Leaves are slender, long and broad.
- Blooms between March and May.
- Can be found in forests, lawns, roadsides to name a few.

## Backyard Flowers

### A Nature observation and Creative Writing Exercise

- Estimated time of completion: 30 minutes. Try to spend at least 15 minutes with each prompt.
- Materials needed: Writing utensil and paper. Colored pencils or other art supplies can be added to plant study to liven it up! However, is not required.
- The point of the prompt is to get you to start observing the natural world around you and connecting this to your own experience. Fear not if what you create doesn't look or sound pretty. All that matters is that you are putting pencil to paper and trying!
- Nature observation: Pick either a plant that was identified in the video, or another plant you have discovered in your time outside.
  - I notice: Write down everything that you notice and observe about the plant. If you are with someone, say these observations out loud. Build upon what each of you observe.
  - I wonder: As you are observing your plant, write down any questions that come to mind about the plant. Some of these could include: why does it look like this? What does it look like at a different time of year? Any question you have is great! If you have no more questions, try saying 'I wonder' and see what comes to you.
  - It reminds me of: As you reflect on the observations and questions you have made, ask yourself what it reminds you of. Try to come up with as many connections as you can.

- After you have finished 'I notice, I wonder, it reminds me of', sit with your chosen plant and try to draw what you see. Again, the focus isn't on making it pretty, it's just drawing what you are seeing. This could be the whole plant, or you could break it up into different parts such as stem, leaf, flower, etc. Feel free to add color and comments!
  
- Creative Writing with Nature:
  - Create a poem/song/story about the plant you have become friends with. Go with whatever format best suits you. Some questions to get your writing pieces going can include:
    - Based off what they look like, what is their name?
    - Why do they look the way they do?
    - Who are they? What is their personality?
    - How does this plant relate to the others around it?
    - How does this plant make you feel?
  - Choose one or multiple of the following questions and use your answer as a basis for your writing piece.
  
- Congratulations! You have now learned the basics of nature observation and created a written piece on what you have found! To create a sense of community during this time of social separation, we want to create a Backyard Flowers class PDF with what you all have created. This will include all the drawings, observations and writings sent in by those who have participated. This way, you can see how you were a part of a bigger collective! If you care to include your work or want an emailed copy of the final PDF, please contact me at [AmeriCorps@clarkambition.org](mailto:AmeriCorps@clarkambition.org). Thank you and I'm very excited to see what you do!