

Nature Journaling: Tips and Tricks

Nature journaling is all about observation. The process helps students develop scientific skills and thinking (investigation, hypotheses and data collection), and creates a connection to nature. Nature journaling is also a great way to give students autonomy over their own learning. Each journal will, and should, look different, and students should be encouraged to make it their own.

This is a great way for students to express themselves, and over time, develop their "nature journal identity." We have adapted lessons that will engage students in activities encouraging them to notice, ask questions, and get curious about nature.

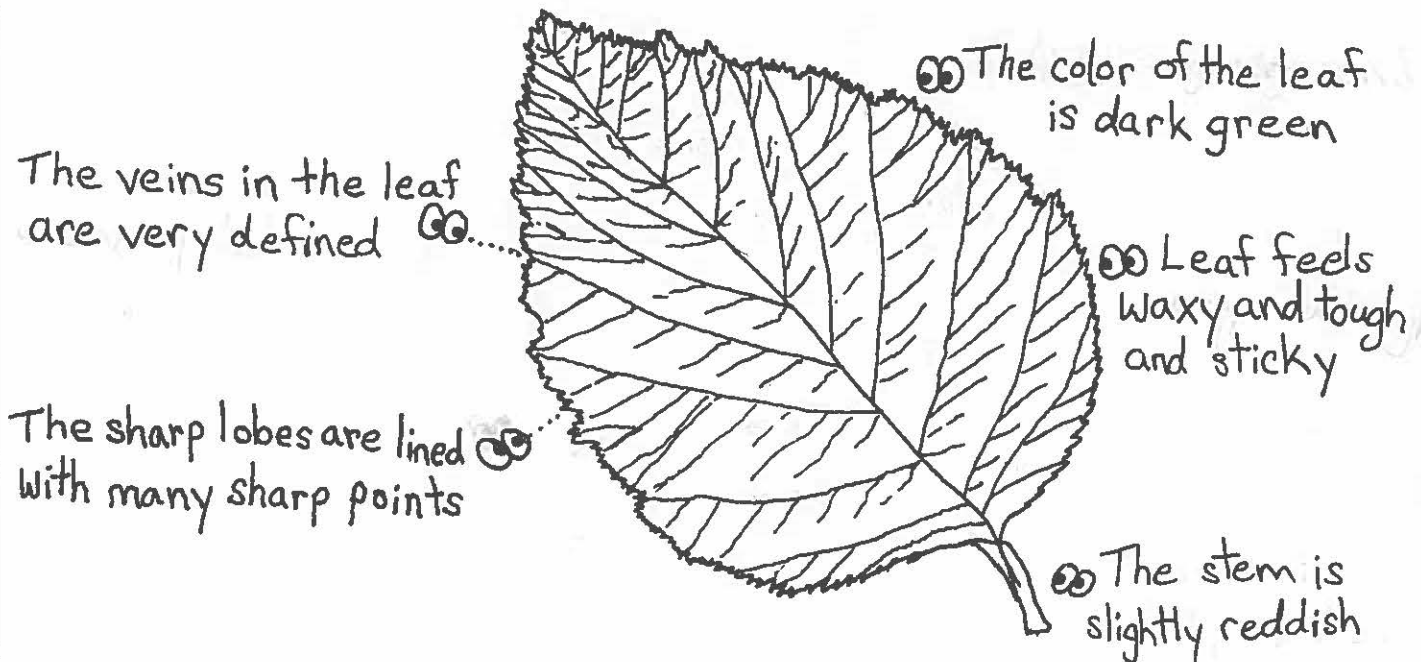
INIWIRMO

The foundation of each nature journal entry is the INIWIRMO. This is an important acronym that will be repeated often and used every time your students are nature journaling. So, what does it stand for.

I Notice (I.N.)

Students will use to "I notice" mostly to describe what they see, but also to detail what they smell, hear, and feel. Ask them to notice colors, how things are arranged, patterns, or small details. Encourage students to act as "investigators" and try to identify something unusual or unexpected.

I NOTICE



I Wonder (I.W.)

There are two ways for students to use "I wonder." The first, is to simply make a list of questions they have about what they are observing. A good place to start is by having them go through "who, what, when, where, and why." This can be denoted with a big, drawn question mark. This is a good option when the class is just starting out with nature journaling.

The second option, the "wonder web," is great when students are more comfortable with nature journaling. The "wonder web" teaches the process of creating a hypothesis. Students will start with their question and circle it.

They will then write potential answers (hypotheses) to their question and connect them to the original question with a line. Once these skills are developed, you may get some students to go a step beyond this and develop a method of answering a question that they have by collecting data or exploring more deeply.

I WONDER

? Why are the edges pointed?

? What kind of tree did this leaf come from?

? Why does the leaf feel waxy?

Wonder Web

To cope with cold weather

To help catch water

Why are the edges pointed?

To deter insects

It Reminds Me Of (I.R.M.O)

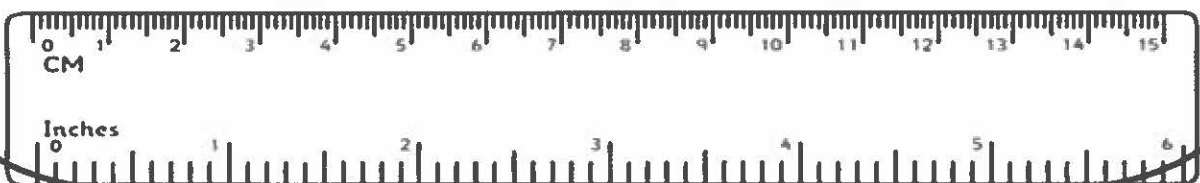
This is all about helping students make connections. Students should write anything they are reminded of. If time allows, it is great to allow students to share their IRMOS's with each other. They will all think differently and have different perspectives, so this can be a fun way to learn how other students think and may spark more learning.

IT REMINDS ME OF

💡 sharp edges of leaf reminds me of a saw blade

💡 stickiness reminds me of tree sap

💡 stem reminds me of unfurling flower buds



Meta-Data

Or "Info about the info." It is important that each journal entry have meta-data, including:

- Date of entry
- Location of entry
- Weather conditions and temp
- Other details about the day

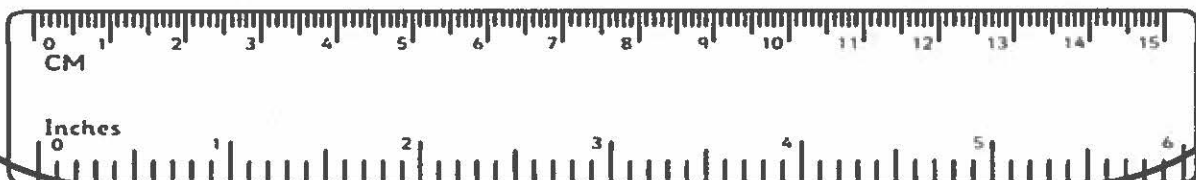
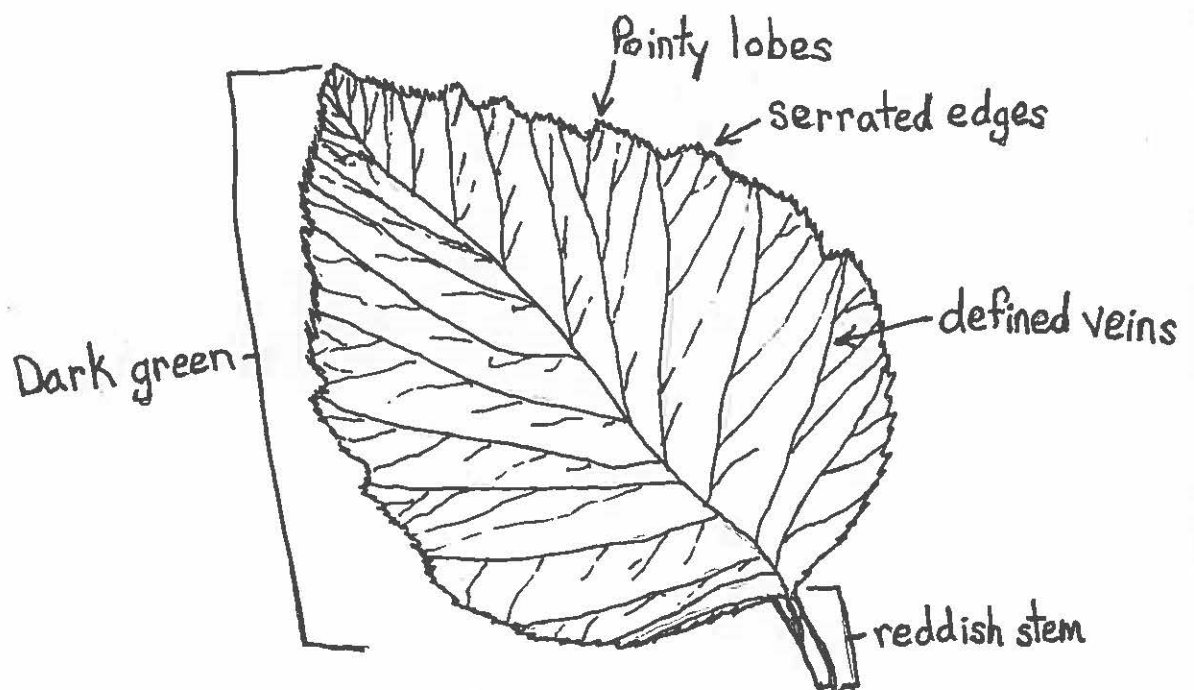
July 20, 2021
Seward, Alaska
Cloudy 55°F
S wind 9mph

Diagram

A big part of nature journaling is the actual drawing of what is being observed. These diagrams / drawings are about conveying accurate information about what the student is seeing.

It is important to emphasize early and often that this is not about creating a perfect, pretty picture. This can trip up students (and adults!). Referring to these as "diagrams" vs "drawings/pictures" might also help take some pressure off.

Students should label their diagrams with things they notice about the diagram. This helps them remember things about what they are seeing and worry less about how their picture looks.



Pictures, Words, and Numbers

Every student has different strengths and thinks in different ways, and nature journaling is flexible enough that students can and should utilize their skills, observe, and express themselves in the way that works best for them.

If a student is more artistically inclined, great! If another student is more interested in using words, wonderful! And if a third student finds more sense in bringing numbers into their journal, equally perfect.

It is good to encourage students to use all three when they can but emphasize that they own their journaling and have freedom to make it work for them.

Numbers

Numbers can be used in all journal entries, but will be especially handy whenever students are measuring, or counting things, etc. Grouping numbers, or measurements, can be an interesting and potentially new way for students to interact with "data." T-charts are a simple and effective way to organize measurements, visualize data, and draw conclusions.

Veins on Leaf: 20

Points on Leaf:





Left Side	Right Side
66	60



Stem: 1 inch / 2.5 cm

Leaf: 3.5 inches long / 9.3 cm
3 inches wide / 7.5 cm
(At Widest Part)

Symbols

Students are encouraged to use symbols as shorthand in their journals. This can make their page more fun to make and look at. Below are some options that students can use as they get started, but you can invent some as a class or students can make up their own. It might be a good idea to create a "nature journal legend" page at the beginning of their notebooks, so each symbol is identified, and they remember what it stands for. They can then easily add their own as they go.

I Notice:    

I Wonder:  

It Reminds Me of:  

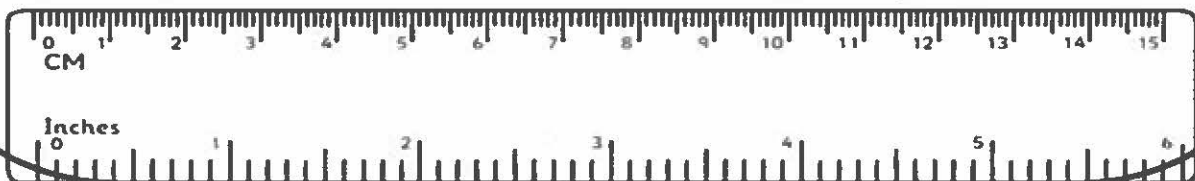
Smells Like... 

I Hear...  

Feels Like...

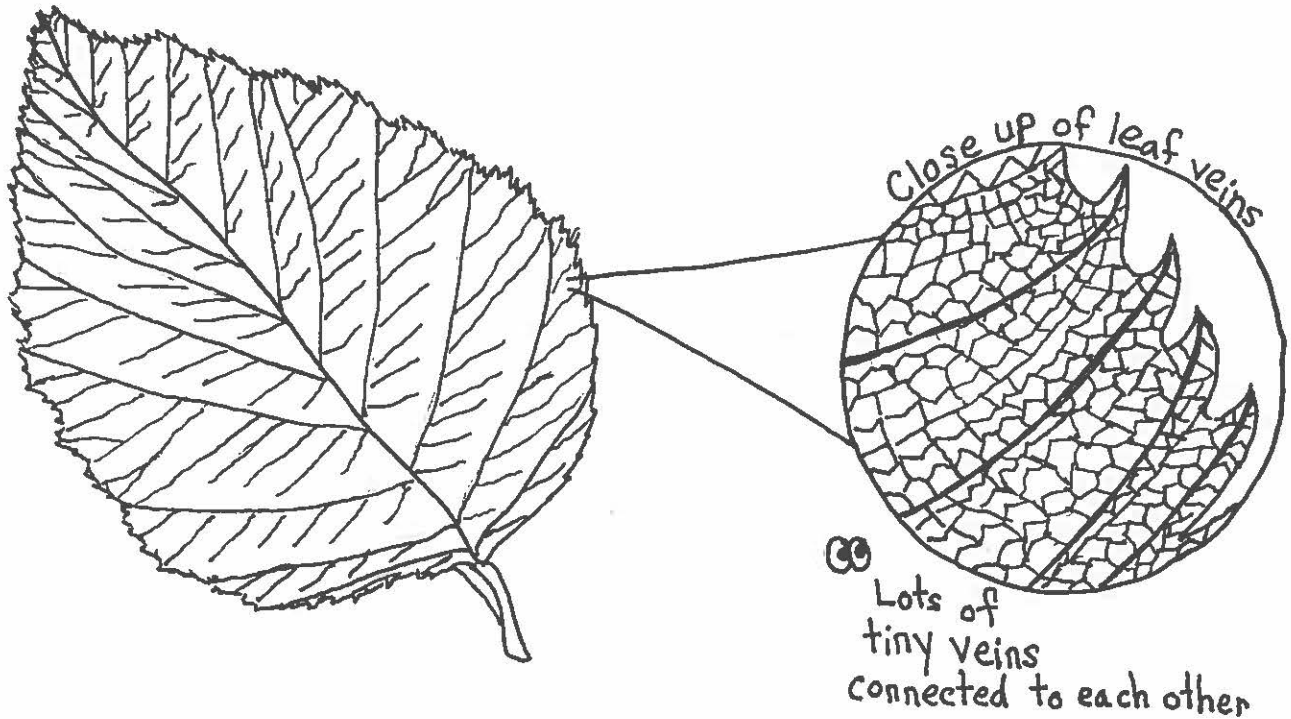


 Up
Close



Blow-ups

These can be helpful when students are looking at small details. Blow-ups may help to prompt more INIWIRMOs. We always notice more and have more questions when we look at things closely. Kids tend to love doing "blow-ups", so this can be a great tool to engage them.



Guiding Theme and Discussion Questions

We will include some guiding themes and post-journaling discussion questions for each lesson. It is important to introduce the focus of the lesson so students can pay extra attention to those elements during their nature journaling. Emphasize that students will have the chance to talk to a Ranger, and to think of possible questions as they are journaling. After journaling, discussions will help students solidify their learning and bring the entire activity together.

