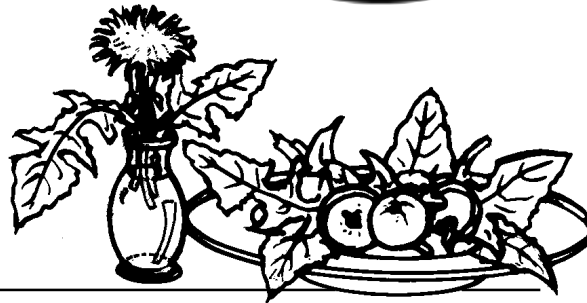




Plant Planet

Did you know that you can eat dandelions? It's true—fresh dandelion leaves make a tasty salad, and the roots can be boiled to make tea. In fact, many of the plants we think of as weeds can be used in dyes, foods, or medicines.



To Dye For

1. Do some research on making plant-based dyes. Prepare five plant-based dyes from plants you collected or purchased from a grocer or greenhouse. Make a display with a picture of each plant and a sample of the dye color it makes.

SAFETY ALERT!

Avoid poison oak, poison ivy, and poison sumac. Also avoid allergen-producing plants, such as ragweed, and plants containing thorns.

HELPFUL HINT

If you have trouble finding a plant in the field guide, it may be helpful to find out the plant's common name.

Another Long-Term Project Idea

2. Visit a woodland, park, field, or pond, and make detailed drawings and descriptions of 10 wild plants. Remember to include the following: size, shape, and coloring of the plant; leaf size and shape; flower, fruit, or nut size; special features of the stem or trunk; and the date and location you found the plant. Use a plant field guide for your area to identify the 10 plants. Look up each plant's scientific name, its common name, how it reproduces, and where and when it grows. Then find out if the plant is edible to animals or humans and if the plant has any other uses (medicinal, dyeing, clothmaking). Make a small field guide about the 10 plants, including your sketches and the results of your research.

Research Ideas

3. Plants were used to treat diseases long before modern medicines were developed. Research the medicinal uses of plants. What products have been developed from rain-forest plants or underwater plants? How effective are medicinal plants compared with more traditional medicines? Write a news article highlighting your findings.
4. Where does your food come from? You might get your food at a supermarket, but most foods in supermarkets originally come from farms. Research current methods of growing food in the United States. How big is the average American farm? What is commonly used for pest control and fertilizer in the United States? Are there effective alternative methods available? Design an informative brochure that explains your findings. You may want to compare the agricultural system of the United States with that of another country.