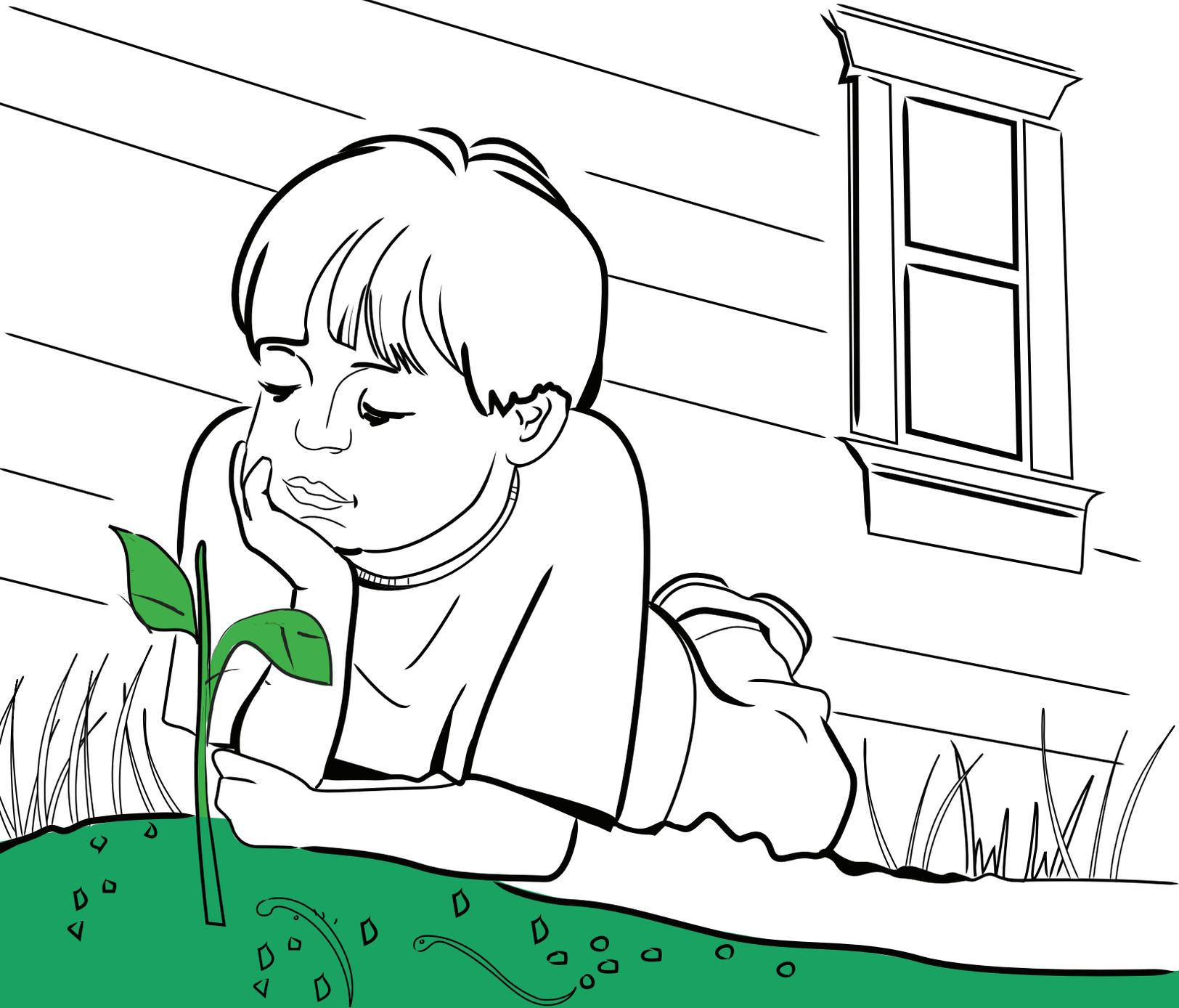




# Backyard or Park Observation Fun

Fun for preschoolers  
and elementary students



This “**from home**” activity is flexible enough to be fun for children of all ages. Older kids can help the youngsters. This activity can be repeated over multiple visits to natural spaces as they change with time, especially in the spring and fall.

# EXPLORE

## how children define life.

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Before you  
go out:  
**Get Ready!**

**Ask:** What do living things need? (air, food, water, shelter/protection, etc.) Name features of living things. (eat, breathe, reproduce, grow/change with time, etc.)

**Record:** Use a whiteboard or sheet of paper on the wall to write down the ideas. For the younger kids have images of these features/needs (draw them, cut them out from magazines, download and print them – older kids can help with this).

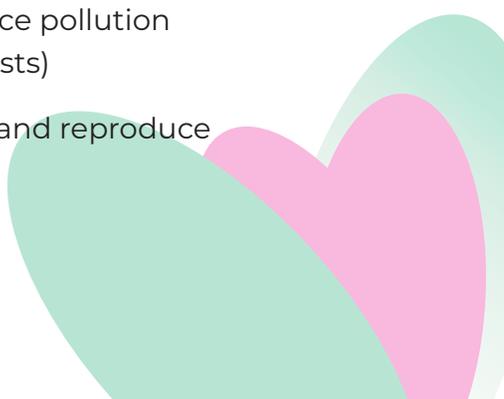
**Compare:** Compare the list to the characteristics of an animal, a plant, a rock, an ocean/river/lake, a glacier.

**Prompt or Suggest:** If the list doesn't include features or needs required by animals (including birds, insects, etc.) and plants then offer suggestions or prompts.

**Compare and Contrast:** Discuss the differences between animals and plants.

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### Key Concepts about Plants:

- Breathe in oxygen like animals and use sunlight during the day for energy (photosynthesis)
  - Breathe in carbon dioxide at night and expel oxygen (part of the global oxygen cycle that enables all life except for a few types of bacteria that don't require oxygen to live)
  - Use nutrients from soil and water as well as sunlight to grow
  - Reproduce by seeds (sexual reproduction) and/or by cuttings (pieces from one plant can grow into other mature plants that are the same as the original plant – asexual reproduction)
  - Can “sequester” carbon dioxide to reduce pollution (role of rain forests and the boreal forests)
  - Many animals must eat plants to grow and reproduce
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# Be a Good Scientist

## ACTIVITY



Good scientists are **RESPECTFUL**:  
allow space to see/observe;  
respect plants and animals



Good scientists **LOOK**:  
check for changes on each visit



Good scientists use their  
**EYES & EARS** first: look and listen,  
practice gentle touch – use your  
pinky finger, **ASK** an adult before  
you **TOUCH, TASTE or SMELL**



Good scientists make a **RECORD**  
of what they see: draw or photograph  
or video or write down what you see;  
add the date, time and place each  
time you make a visit.



For older kids: record the  
temperature, weather conditions,  
and season of the year





Go into the yard,  
garden, park or  
other natural  
space:

Make  
Observations!

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Encourage each child to choose their own space in the garden/park/natural place in your neighbourhood that they can visit and observe each time you visit.

Remember container/potted gardens and balconies/decks are natural spaces too!

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## ACTIVITIES BASED ON YOUR OBSERVATIONS:

### For younger children:

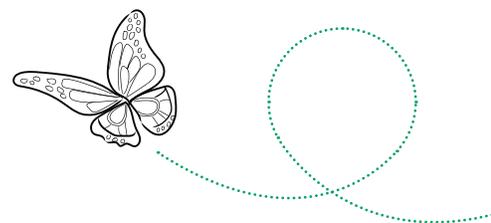
draw a picture, take a photo,  
make a leaf rubbing (see below)

- **Leaf Rubbing:** white paper and crayons
  - Position the leaf, underside up, under one layer of paper – the leaf should be visible through the paper
  - Trace the outline of the leaf with a crayon, then rub the broad side of the crayon across the leaf within the outline of the leaf – you should see the leaf veining in the rubbing
  - Looks for different leaf shapes, patterns and sizes

### For older children:

write descriptive paragraphs or poems (see below); draw a map of the observation space and update it with each visit

- **Poems Types:** acrostic, haiku, concrete, diamante
  - Children can research different types of poems and use their favourite format to create a poem based on their observations and research – don't forget to illustrate them!



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**Share:** Post Leaf Rubbings and/or Poems in your home or, with a parent's permission, on social media or share with other family and friends via email.

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Record your  
Observations  
Here!