



Newsletter

Leaf Observation

Leaves are everywhere! We see them on trees and shrubs, walk on them as blades of grass, and eat them in our salads. Leaves brighten our world, transform the energy of sunlight into food for animals and people, convert carbon dioxide to oxygen in the air we breathe, and inspire us with their beauty, assorted shapes, and colors.

Generations ago, walking was a way of life that gave people time to observe nature. They watched leaves bud, grow, change colors, and fall, as indicators of the changing seasons. In today's busy world, especially in cities, we have much less contact with the outdoors. Yet we gain something precious—a greater understanding of our interconnectedness with life—when we slow down and observe the natural world.

Here are some ideas to spark an investigation of leaves. If your child shows interest, get some library books on plants or guide her research online so she can learn more.

What You Need:

Leaves to observe: gather a variety of leaves with different shapes and sizes.

Activity 1:

Draw a simple leaf and identify its parts (see illustration). Discuss those

parts with your child, then invite her to draw and label a picture of her own.

☆ **Activity 2:**

1. Ask her to spread out the collection of leaves, then sort them by shape into piles. Name the shapes with her, if you can. (Search “leaf shapes” online for help.)
2. Examine the leaves closely. Notice how they differ yet contain the same basic parts.

☆ **Activity 3:**

1. Invite her to look at and carefully feel the edges of each type of leaf. Are they rough and toothed, or smooth?
2. Note the top surfaces of the leaves. Are they soft and fuzzy with little hairs, hard and waxy, brittle, or flexible? Will water bead on them?
3. Turn the leaves over and observe their undersides. Are they different from the tops? How?
3. Is there any indication of disease or insect damage?

☆ **Activity 4:**

1. Have her measure the length and width of various leaves.
2. (Optional) Note the names and measurements on paper.

Try one or more of the following ideas to let your child experience the fun of watching plants grow!

- Plant a few quick-growing vegetables like beans or lettuce.
- Keep a few pots of herbs such as parsley, thyme, or rosemary on your window sill.
- Plant marigold or calendula seeds in a pot. Watch them grow and bloom.
- Pick up a small geranium plant at the store. They thrive by a sunny window and produce an almost continuous supply of bright red, pink, or

white flowers.

- Buy an amaryllis bulb at Thanksgiving and watch it bloom by New Year.
- Place a spoonful of alfalfa seeds in a jar and grow a batch of tasty, crunchy sprouts for salads and sandwiches.
- Get a small climbing philodendron and let it creep up a wall or banister. Not only are these plants very hearty indoors, they improve air quality.

