

SPRING 2020

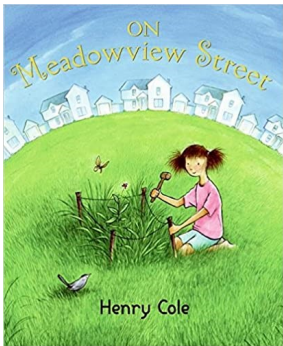
Issue IV

# SWIFTlet

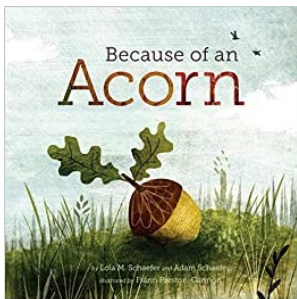
Soil and Water Information for Teachers: lessons on environmental themes

## NATIVE PLANTS

### LITERACY CONNECTIONS



By, Henry Cole



By, Lola M. Schaefer & Adam Schaefer

### Ohio Natives

**State Tree:** Ohio Buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*)

**State Wildflower:** Great White Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*)

**State Native Fruit:** Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*)



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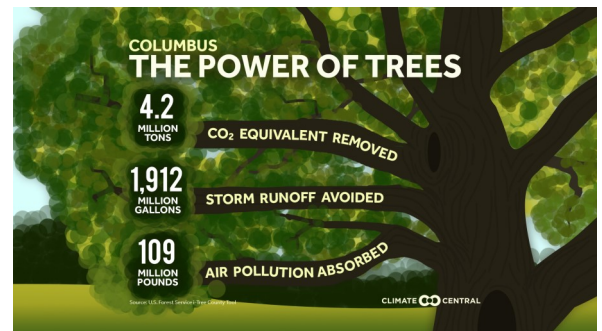
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April: Happy Native Plant Month, Ohio! Native plants—those that occur in a specific geographic region over hundreds or thousands of years—have immeasurable environmental and aesthetic benefits. Native plants in Ohio, including the white oak (*Quercus alba*), sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) and purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), matter. When it comes to their ecological and environmental importance, native plants are the best of the best and to celebrate this, April was recently designated as Ohio Native Plant month. This month (and everyday) let's show a little love to our native plants to thank them for the many ways they matter to people and wildlife. Native plants:

- Grow extensive root systems that hold soil in place (reducing soil erosion and pollution) and aid in managing and filtering stormwater runoff
- Often require less water and no fertilizers or pesticides
- Provide natural habitat for wildlife, including many bird, insect and mammal species
- Preserve the natural history of a geographic area
- Require little maintenance once established while providing a palette of colorful flowers, fruits/berries and leaves

Incorporating native plants into your backyard or community, has measurable benefits to both terrestrial and aquatic habitats AND provides children with an opportunity to make meaningful and lasting connections to nature. Investigations and explorations focused on the abundance and distribution of living organisms, life cycles, natural heritage, plant form and function, calculating and measuring plant space/growth requirements and environmental art, are just some of the ways native plants can be used to engage children in active learning and instill a lasting sense of environmental stewardship.

We invite you to celebrate with us this month and everyday because native plants are so very wonderful!



Runoff increases greatly in urban areas because of roads, roofs and parking lots. Native plants have deeper and more extensive root systems that prevent erosion and provide extra filtration. Research suggests that native landscaping in the form of rain gardens, bioswales, prairies, green roofs, and urban tree canopies, may provide a low-cost alternative to large-scale infrastructure solutions to reduce runoff. Native plants and trees intercept rainfall while their roots aid infiltration and prevent runoff by acting as pathways for water flow.

# NATIVE PLANTS

## NATIVE PLANTS AT HOME

**It's time to get outside and explore! Let's look for native plants that are living in your backyard, community or local park.**

### Supplies:

- \* Space outside to explore
- \* Copy of the [SWIFTlet IV Native Plant Scavenger Hunt & Coloring Page](#)
- \* Access to or copies of the Ohio DNR [Spring Wildflowers of Ohio](#) and [Trees of Ohio](#) Field Guides
- \* Pencil, colored pencils, crayons and/or markers
- \* Reusable bag, backpack or container to carry art supplies
- \* Clipboard, large book, piece of cardboard or some other hard object to write on when out in the field
- \* Binoculars (optional)
- \* Magnifying Glass (optional)

### Procedures:

- \* Pack supplies for an exciting outdoor adventure and find a safe place outside to explore and discover!
- \* Remind explorers that they are investigating the habitats of many plants and animals. Just as scientists do, they need to use gentle hands and make careful observations using their senses.
- \* Explore the outdoors, looking for the featured native plants on the FSWCD Native Plant Scavenger Hunt & Coloring Page.
- \* When explorers find the plants or evidence of the plants, encourage them to use their art supplies to color the corresponding illustration on the coloring page.
- \* During the outdoor adventure, encourage explorers to look for other native plants than those featured on the Scavenger Hunt & Coloring Page (using the Ohio DNR field guides will help). Explorers can add an illustration of the a native plant they discovered in the blank space on the Scavenger Hunt & Coloring Page. Additional illustrations can be added to the back page.
- \* When explorers are done exploring and observing, don't forget to do a quick tick check.
- \* For native plants not found outside (or during your exploration), encourage explorers to browse the Ohio DNR field guides or the [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower website](#) to "discover" any remaining plants.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### [Spring Wildflowers of Ohio Field Guide](#)

#### [Trees of Ohio Field Guide](#)

Free from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources

#### [Ohio Native Plant Month](#)

This website celebrates April 2020 as the first Native Plant Month in Ohio

#### [On Meadowview Street](#)

Read aloud of On Meadowview Street

#### [Exploring the Native Plant World Curriculum](#)

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center shares a native plant curriculum with resources that can be used in the classroom and anywhere outside

## GIVE IT A TRY!!



Spread the love for native plants using Seed Balls!

[Audubon Seed Balls](#)

[Childhood by Nature Seed Bombs](#)



## EXTENDING LEARNING:

- \* Using the ODNR Spring Wildflowers Field Guide, see if you can find the Jack-in-the-Pulpit. What pollinator does this plant attract and how does it attract it?
- \* Many animals depend on native plants to meet their basic needs. Can you think of different ways animals (birds, insects, mammals) use native plants for food, shelter or for some other need?
- \* For Explorers that love art, give Nature Journaling a try! These resources from [Childhood by Nature](#) and [Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#) can help get you started.

[Dandelion Pesto Recipe](#)  
Bring the plants from the yard to the table and make a dandelion pesto with these simple ingredients:  
dandelions, garlic, olive oil, parmesan cheese & pine nuts.

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