



Kindergarten Late Spring Nature Walk: One-Page Summary

This walk has different themes and activities, do in any order to avoid crowding among the groups.

- Looking at **seasonal changes**....find a spot to sit (on wall, under tree, in the meadow) and use your senses to describe changes:
 - Close your eyes and feel the wind and hear the wind, what other sounds?
 - Feel the air, how is different from autumn or winter?
 - The sunlight feels stronger/warmer.
 - Do you hear different sounds? Birds, insects
 - What do you see on the ground? Green growth. Can you dig in the earth? Soft now.
- **Water:** What happened to the snow? Can we see the brook? Is the water moving? Yes. It flows down hill. The water helps animals and plants grow.
- What happens to the **animals** in spring? Are there any in the school yard? Yes. How do we know? We see them and hear them. We might even smell a skunk. Take a quiet moment to listen for the bird calls.
 - Some animals come back to life from eggs, such as insects. Insects and caterpillars can eat leaves.
 - Birds return from winter homes--we can watch for them. They might eat seeds or worms.
 - There are fox, deer, skunks, raccoons, squirrels, chipmunks, mice, and small snakes that live nearby our school. They might eat seeds from plants or insects or other critters. We may see them once in a while, but more likely to see their poop or tracks along the stream.
- What about the **plants**? What happened to them? They are blooming and growing leaves.
 - For the spring walk, we do not collect samples, as plants are trying to grow (In fall we did collect fallen leaves and seeds because this didn't disturb the growth.)
 - Many plants come to life in spring. Look at **dandelions**. (Usually there are some over the bridge in the meadow.) Can dig one up with trowel to look at roots. What we might think of as one flower is actually a collection of lots of different flowers. Kids can look at dandelion with magnifying glass to see it is a collection of flowers, each with a seed; can also blow dandelion seed head.
 - Some of the bigger plants (trees) are growing flowers, leaves and more branches. In the winter walk, students marked some trees with blue tape. As you explore, look for trees with blue tape. Does anyone remember which tree they tagged? How has it changed since winter? Here are some trees you might discuss:
 - **White Pine** - Big pine tree between wall and playground. You can see the new growth. Does this tree have a leaf? Yes, its pine needle is its leaf.
 - **Mountain Ash** - tree outside ramp rail next to half-day Kindergarten room. They pass this tree every day out to recess, but take a moment to observe it in spring as a scientist.
 - **Decaying tree** – See if the children can spot any decaying trees in the woods. Contrast them to the blooming trees. Decaying trees are a home for woodpeckers. What will happen to this tree over time?

Record what you see on the *Signs of Spring* worksheet. We do not distribute each child a worksheet as it can be distracting to them.

There is a path through the woods. It starts behind the play structure goes a short way through the woods, over a bridge, continues as a mowed path through the meadow. This is a great way to see woods and tall grasses of meadows.

Use the boxes to observe an insect, and then release it. The skunk burrow referenced on page 21 no longer exists.

KINDERGARTEN NATURE WALKS

Kindergarten Walks usually last 30 minutes and are based on:

1. Environmental Awareness

Sensory exploration/ Sense of wonder
 Discover/ Joy of learning
 Sharing the excitement
 Experiencing nature's rhythms and cycles



2. Developing attitudes of respect toward

The environment
 Each other
 Themselves as learners

3. Observation of plants and animals sharing their schoolyard

Look, listen, smell, and touch to explore their schoolyard
 Make comparisons, note similarities and differences
 Make connections and note interactions
 Examine plant parts
 Observe and share observations of seasonal changes
 Discover how plants grow and change with the seasons

A major challenge is helping young children learn how to behave on a Nature Walk, how to focus, observe, wonder, and thereby enjoy exploring, discovering, learning and sharing.

Remember your main goal is that children enjoy discovering and learning from their own observations, not specific science content.
 Be willing to:

Follow the children's interests and the unexpected discovery

Be flexible and focus on one or two concepts/activities instead of the three or four you planned

Don't stay out too long

Be enthusiastic and have fun

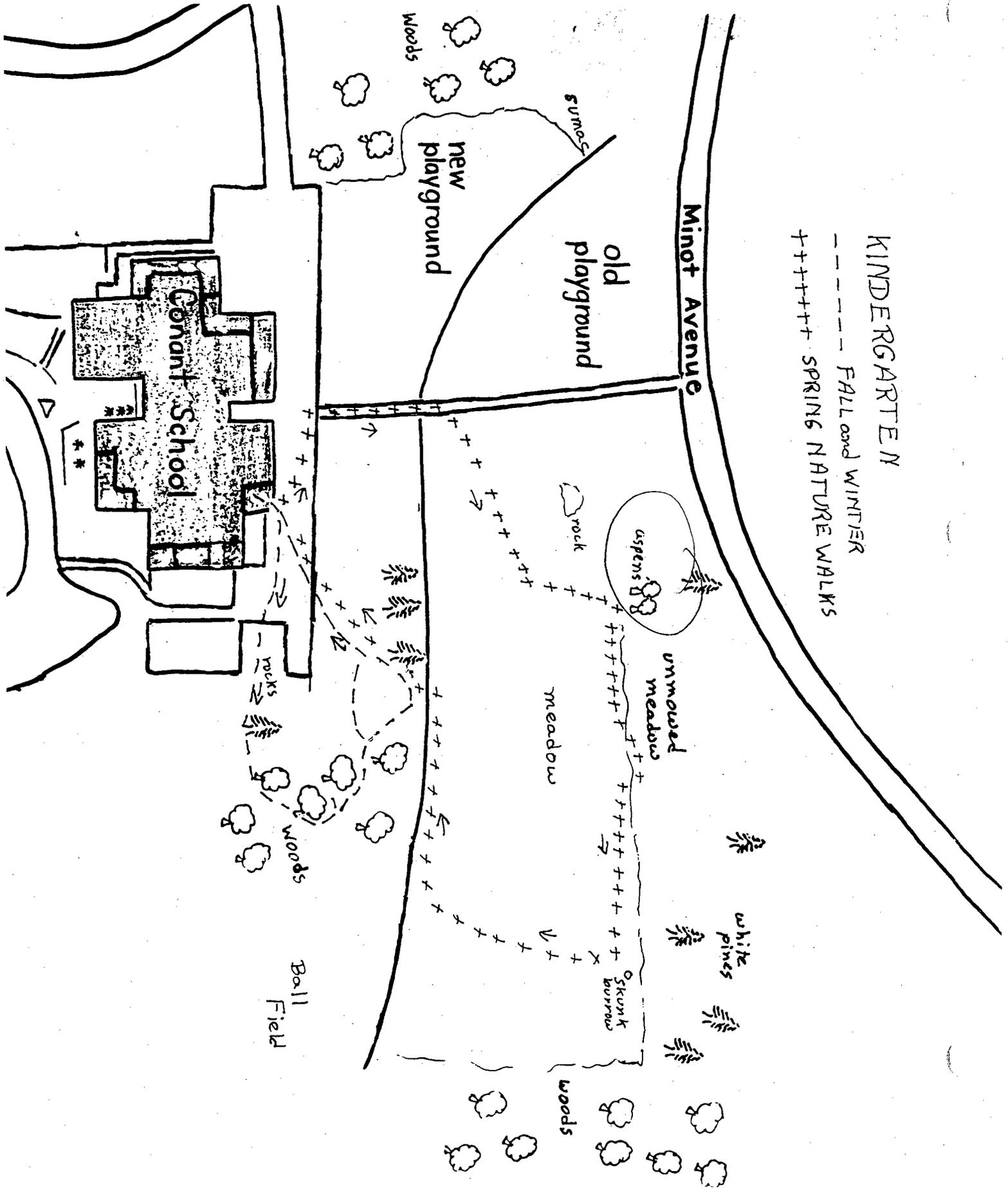
Communicate with the teacher

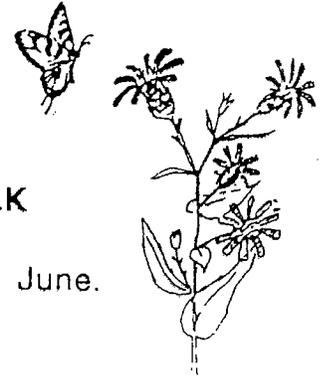


The key to success on nature walks is to be flexible and focus on one or two concepts/activities instead of the three or four you planned.

KINDERGARTEN

----- FALL and WINTER
 ++++++ SPRING NATURE WALKS





KINDERGARTEN LATE SPRING NATURE WALK

Schedule this last Nature Walk for late May, or even early June.

Objectives:

- Look, listen, smell and touch to explore their schoolyard in late spring
- Observe changes in the marked tree buds
- Observe, describe, and compare seasonal weather changes
- Discover how and why meadow flowers and trees change in late spring
- Enjoy exploring and discovering

Before going out:

As before other Nature Walks review with children drawings, murals, and charts from earlier expeditions. What do children think they will find this time? What clothing will they need to wear compared with other trips? Why?

What happened to the tree branches they brought into the classroom before spring vacation? Has anyone been watching the trees they marked outdoors? What is happening to them? What about trees in their yard at home? What about meadow wild flowers? How will they have changed? What plant parts will they find? Review the predictions they made about plants in late spring after their last Nature Walk in early April.

What colors and sounds and smells do they think they will find in May in their schoolyard?

Materials:

- Hand lenses
- Bug box
- Clipboard, paper, pencil
- Signs of Late Spring Worksheet



1. Walk up the blacktop path over the brook. Compare changes in the brook and the meadow puddles. Where has all the water gone? Sit on the grass and close their eyes. What can they hear? Does the meadow sound anything like fall or winter or even early spring? Listen to the birds calling. Feel the warm sun. What can they smell?

If no one told them what season it was, but led them blindfolded to the meadow, sat them down, and asked them what season it was could they tell? How? Are the seasons really very different? What makes them different? How have plant parts changed? Which plant parts have changed the most?

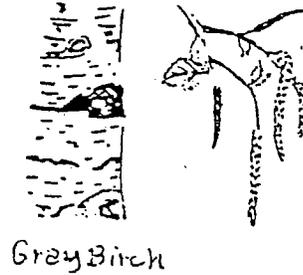
2. Walk across the meadow, looking at and enjoying plants and any tiny animals. What plant part are they seeing that they didn't see in the meadow in winter and early spring? Flowers!

Explore for wild flowers, including dandelions, yellow hawkweed, and clover in bloom. Find a dandelion or hawkweed with both a flower, a wilted closed up flower, and a seed head. Pick the blossom and ask children how many flowers you are holding. Probably fifty or more, as every petal is a complete flower and will of course produce its own seed. Pull off separate petals and let children look at the flower parts. With or without a hand lens it is clear each petal is a flower. Open the wilted flower head and observe the seeds forming, and then look at the seed head. No wonder there are so many seeds in a dandelion puff ball!



Are there any pollinating insects such as honey bees or butterflies? Look in the meadow grasses for grasshoppers, ants, earthworms or earthworm castings, crickets, larva, and other tiny creatures. Take a bug box along for closer examination. Are the pixie cup and other lichens still there? Check out the skunk burrow; any signs of meadow mouse tunnels? Any rabbit scat?

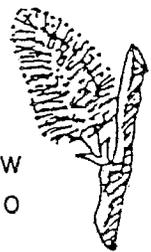
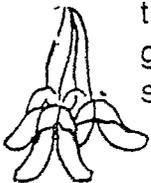
3. What has happened to the trees along the edge of the meadow and the brook? Have all the trees leafed out? Do some trees have baby leaves (oaks are late bloomers) and some trees full size leaves? What do baby leaves look and feel like? Check out the oak and gray birch near the skunk burrow. Think of the tiny winter buds and all that new growth coming from those tiny buds!



Do trees have flowers? Many tree flowers are so inconspicuous they go unnoticed. All deciduous trees have flowers. They saw both the aspen and pussy willow flowers last Nature Walk. Which trees will be in bloom will depend on just when you go out and seasonal weather patterns, but some will surely be in bloom throughout May. Have children use hand lenses to look at these tiny beautiful flowers.

4. Gradually work your way back across the brook to the playground and the marked trees. Look at the quaking aspen, white pine, red maple, mountain ash, and pussy willow children marked and talk about changes. Did the buds they brought into the classroom change the same way these buds outdoors did? Why did they bloom weeks before the buds outdoors? Did being in the warm class room and in water (not ice) make a difference? Is warmth important for plants?

Pussy willows and aspens had fuzzy flowers early in the spring; what's happened to those flowers now? Eventually they will turn into seeds just as the dandelion flower does. The red maple has lovely delicate red flowers, and in May the seed may already be formed; children often call maple seeds helicopters because of how they move in the air. Pine trees don't have flowers, but the buds do grow into new leaves and new cones will grow on the tree this summer.



5. Sit down in a quiet place. Bring out the Signs of Late Spring Worksheet and have children take turns checking off what they found. On a separate paper make a list of other interesting things they discovered.

How does what they have seen, heard, smelled and touched differ from fall, winter, and early spring? Using their hands to frame a picture, take their last pretend snapshot of the year in Conant schoolyard.



This is their last Nature Walk for this year. Have they enjoyed learning about nature by exploring their schoolyard? What have they enjoyed most? Why? Can they go on learning about nature by exploring their yard at home? How about vacation trips? Is exploring out doors a good way to learn and have fun at the same time?

6. Return to school.

Back in the classroom:

Post Signs of Late Spring Worksheets and the lists groups made on their Nature Walk. Make a Class Chart of what children saw, heard, smelled, and felt in Conant Schoolyard in late spring. Compare with fall and winter and early spring Nature Walks.

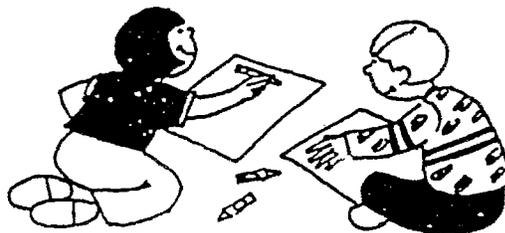
Either have each child draw a picture of the schoolyard in late spring or do a class mural depicting Conant in late spring. Encourage use of Worksheets and other charts and lists to help children remember. What did they see when they took their pretend snapshots?

Have children list at least three things they like about each season. Is there anything they didn't like about a season? What and why? Which is each child's favorite season?

Divide the children into groups according to their favorite season. Have each group present to the class the reasons for their choice. Chart the children's favorite seasons with a list of reasons.

Have each child draw a picture of a wildflower and then of a tree, showing and labeling *roots*, *stem*, *leaves*, *flower*, and *seed* on each drawing.

What do children like about plants? Make a class list of why they like plants.



SIGNS OF LATE SPRING





