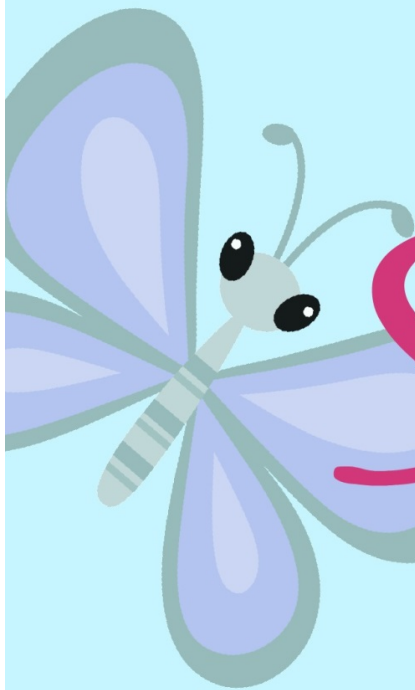
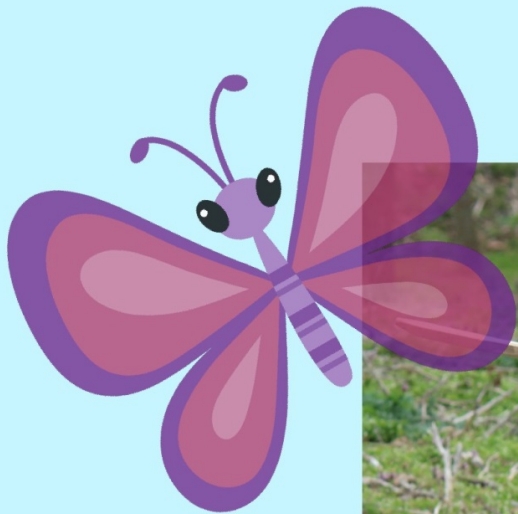
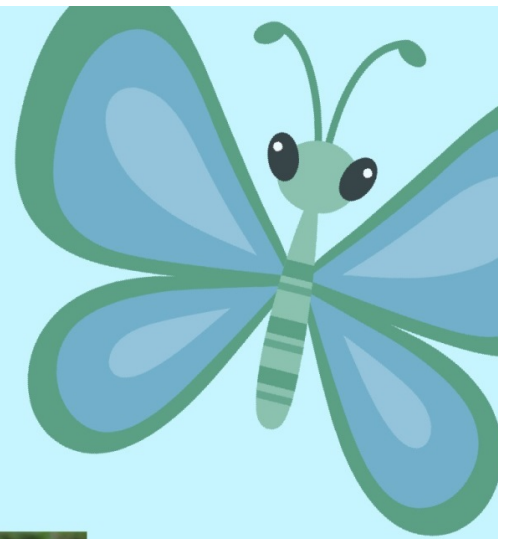


NATURE BY THE SEASON

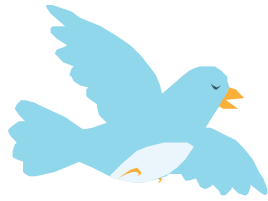
Preschool & Kindergarten



Spring



Cindy West, M. Ed.
Shining Dawn Books



Nature by the Season
for Preschool & Kindergarten

Spring

Topics Covered:

birds, trees, flowers, insects, mammals,
amphibians, rain, waterways, rocks and much more

Nature by the Season

By Cindy West

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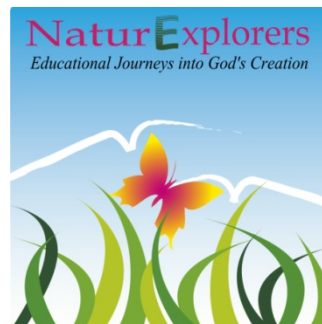
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Introduction

God is so cool. He gives us nature in so much depth and glory that adults can study it for years and years without learning everything. He also gives us nature in such sweet beauty and simplicity that even a preschooler can understand.

Preschoolers and kindergarteners are naturally inclined to love nature because of their inquisitiveness, active bodies and keen eyes for finding things unique and often hidden. I have watched my own little ones become some of my best nature buddies because they are always ready for the adventure and excitement. That's why I've created this series of nature studies for you. I know your preschooler or kindergartener is up for the adventure, too, and is ready and willing to become your nature buddy!

Getting your little one outdoors early with a zest for discovering God's creation will set him up with a life-long desire to know God more and grow closer to Him. He already has a child-like faith in God; why not cement it into a deep adult faith as you introduce him to God's marvels and miracles through nature?

As you go through this book of spring nature ideas with your child, it's my sincere prayer that these won't merely be activities to keep your little one occupied. I hope you will use these activities to talk about God and His wonders every chance you get. Explanations as simple as, "God made the flowers. Aren't they beautiful?" will go a long way in building a foundation of knowing the Lord as your child grows!

Nature Bags

Keep nature bags very simple, or even nonexistent. Little ones appreciate spontaneous adventures way more than the carefully thought out materials you might pack. Most of the walks I've suggested will require nothing. Otherwise, simply pack along the item or two you need in a small bag. Some of you may desire to pack a nature field guide, a notebook and/or colored pencils to encourage early nature notebooking, but these are not necessary.

Safety

Participating in nature walks with your young child is a must! There are too many dangers to allow little people to go off on their own.

Since preschoolers and kindergarteners often still discover their world through the senses, be sure to explain that we never eat or touch things in nature unless an adult says it's okay. (It's not okay to eat anything other than garden fruits and veggies when



outdoors. It's also not okay to touch any fungi, since young children aren't conscious about keeping hands out of their mouths. Beware of poisonous plants and dangerous animals, too.)

Watch for areas that could pose a risk to little ones like cliffs, holes, falling limbs/rocks, water, etc. Don't worry - as long as you're with your child, the risks are very minimal. I just want to make you aware of the potential dangers, especially if your child wanders off alone.

Field Trips

Spring is a great time for some nature-related field trips! Visit an arboretum, plant nursery, garden center, farm with baby animals, zoo, park, nature trail, or other location brimming with the new life of spring. Many destinations offer preschool themed classes, too, so be sure to ask.

How to Use this Book

Before moving on to the activity ideas, you'll notice I've included a lengthy list of living literature. I believe literature connections are paramount to the overall understanding of any subject for young children. Because of this, I strongly encourage you to read at least one book with your child for each of the topics you choose to teach.

I also encourage the use of field guides when appropriate. Unfortunately, most field guides aren't made for preschoolers or kindergarteners. I've come up with a short list of acceptable field guides that can be easily adapted to give your child exposure to nature identification. Although it probably won't be an issue at this early age, beware that almost all field guides will discuss "millions of years" at some point.

The nature ideas and activities are divided into four main sections:

- Weather
- Animals
- Plants
- Ground

Within each section you will find the following topics:

- Weather
 - Snow
 - Rain
 - Storms
 - Wind
 - Clouds
- Animals
 - Birds
 - Mammals
 - Amphibians
 - Insects
- Plants
 - Deciduous Trees and Bushes
 - Evergreens
 - Wildflowers
 - Fungi and Mosses
- Ground
 - Rocks
 - Soil
 - Waterways



Within each subtopic, you will find a few nature walk suggestions, each with at least one follow-up activity to do indoors. Sometimes it's a game, experiment or recipe; other times it's a worksheet. The worksheets can be found at the end of the book. Please don't feel obligated to do the follow-up activities - just exploring nature is enough! Young children typically love to keep learning as long as it's interesting, so I've tried to seize those moments with these additional activities. For ease of use the outdoor activities are highlighted in light blue, and the follow-up activities are indented underneath.

I have chosen not to include outdoor notebooking pages because little ones need to experience nature in very tactile ways. Most of them are not ready for recording things from their walks just yet. However, if your child seems interested, by all means encourage nature notebooking! Just be sure you never force it. Nature notebooking should be a joy. If you force it now, your child may grow to hate it when he can actually draw and write well. For now, have a blank notebook ready if the desire strikes.

You will, then, find the outdoor suggestions to be very hands-on and active, engaging all the wonder of children and involving their senses. This is how they learn about their world! I have included several leading questions and often have included rich vocabulary that you might want to begin using in conversations. Little ones can pick up so much through simple, yet rich discussions with their parents!

Table of Contents

(Click on the titles below to take you to various section of the book.)

[Living Literature](#)

[Weather](#)

[Animals](#)

[Plants](#)

[Ground](#)

[Worksheets](#)

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Living Literature

General Spring Books

It's Spring! by Linda Glaser
How Do You Know It's Spring? by Allan Fowler
When Spring Comes by Natalie Kinsey-Warnock
Everything Spring by Jill Esbaum

Snow

The Happy Day by Ruth Krauss
Snow Rabbit, Spring Rabbit by Sung Na
Sugar Snow by Laura Ingalls Wilder

Rain

The Rain Came Down by David Shannon
When Rain Falls by Melissa Stewart
Mushroom in the Rain by Mirra Ginsburg
Listen to the Rain by Bill Martin
Rain by Peter Spier

Storms

Like a Hundred Drums by Annette Griesman
Franklin and the Thunderstorm by Paulette Bourgeois
Just a Thunderstorm by Mercer Mayer
The Way the Storm Stops by Michelle Meadows

Wind

The Wind Blew by Pat Hutchins
Feel the Wind by Author Dorros
Gilberto and the Wind by Marie Hall Ets

Clouds

Little Cloud by Eric Carle
It Looked Like Spilt Milk by Charles Shaw
The Sun's Asleep Behind the Hill by Paul Zelinsky

Animals

North Country Spring by Reeve Lindbergh

Birds

Have You Seen Birds? by Joanne Oppenheim
The Bird Alphabet Book by Jerry Pallotta
Feathers for Lunch by Lois Ehlert
Birds by Kevin Henkes
About Birds: A Guide for Children by Cathryn Sill



Weather

Spring is a time for many varied weather days. Snowy days are followed by exciting storms with wild winds, eventually bringing forth calm, sunny and warm days. This is a good season for comparing the weather daily!



Appropriate for all weather activities:

Chart the weather. [Use the chart](#) and weather pieces to make a simple weather chart.

Snow

A spring snow is a neat opportunity to show the emergence of signs of spring in spite of the wintery weather.



Take a walk to look for very early flowers, buds or greenery poking up out of the snow. Turn the walk into a scavenger hunt by asking, “What colors can we find peeking out of the snow?” Tell your child that the things you’re finding are signs of spring.

Make “buds to blooms” art. Draw, or cut from construction paper, two trees with branches only. On the first tree, let your child glue rice, puffed rice or uncooked macaroni shells to represent buds on the tree. On the second tree, glue popped popcorn kernels to represent the buds opening into flowers. Be sure to go for another nature walk once the trees begin to bloom!

Find signs of melting snow. Dripping icicles, running streams, puddles and patches of grass are all signs that the snow is melting. Talk about the frozen water turning back into liquid water because of the warmer temperatures and sunshine.

Bring some snow indoors for a melting experiment. Tell your child that snow melts when temperatures get warmer. Place an equal amount of snow in three equal containers and choose three places in your house to place the snow for 15 minutes. (You might lead your child to choose places like the freezer, refrigerator, on top of the warm stove or dryer, in a sunny window or in a hot and steamy bathroom.) Let her predict which container of snow will melt the fastest. Check your containers every 15 minutes until you have a clear winner.

Rain

Enjoy the rainy days of spring! A word of caution, though: Although I encourage you to get outside in the rain with your children, please stay indoors if there is even a hint of storm activity, or if the weather is chilly. The rains I'm encouraging you to observe in the following activities are light, warm, calm rains.



On a warm, rainy day, go play in the rain. Taste it. Smell it. Touch it. See where it goes and what it does. Listen to the sounds it makes. And have fun!

Make rain paintings. Let your little one sprinkle powdered tempera paint or powdered drink pouches on sheets of thick paper. Place the paper outside in a light rain and watch the rain paint for you.

Insects or Not?

Insects have three body parts, wings, two antennae and six legs. Some creatures, like spiders, seem like they might be insects, but aren't because they have eight legs. Cut out the insects and other creatures below. Determine if they are insects or not and glue them into the chart under the correct heading. (Mom, there are six insects – all with six legs and four that aren't.)

Insects	Not Insects

