



“Adopt-a-Bud”

Adapted by Emily Bishton

This is an activity that can be done by children of any age, and can vary in complexity as desired. It’s a fabulous way to learn about the “little things that make the world go round” and bond with plants in their own yard, with the side benefits of gaining observation skills, patience, and understanding of the seasons.

March is a great month to start, and the only tool needed is one or two 12-inch pieces of colorful ribbon or string! An option is a small notepad and colored pencils or crayons for children who like to draw.

Step 1: Take a slow walk around your yard, and stop at each deciduous tree or shrub to get to know its leafless twigs and branches. Ask kids to look at the lowest limbs, touch them, and even smell them to really explore each plant. Explain that each bare branch has buds on it that are still “curled up tight and sleeping” or “just starting to wake up” and grow, and then help them find the buds.

Step 2: Ask each child to choose one or two of the plants to “adopt” and watch over like a pet plant. Then they can loosely tie their ribbon or string near one of the buds on a lower branch, which will be easy for them to observe any time they are outside. Take a close-up of each child with their “adopted” plant to start a photo journal, and/or have children draw a picture of their buds.

Step 3: Whenever you go out in the yard with your kids, encourage them to check on their adopted plant, and then let you know how their buds are growing, and other details they observe. Questions to ask are: What color is it? Is it growing into a leaf or a flower? How big is it? Are there any bites out of it, or creatures living on it? (Bees, aphids, ladybugs, caterpillars, or other insects can be just as exciting to observe as the plant growth!) Once a week, take a close-up to add to your photo journal and/or have children draw a picture of their plants. You can keep this going all spring or all year, since the plants will keep changing with the seasons and eventually drop all leaves and flowers and be bare again, filled with “sleepy buds”.