



A Youth Gardening project
sponsored by The Gardeners of America

Spring
Activities

Meet My Terrific Tree!

Welcome to a special project designed for youths of all ages: Meet My Terrific Tree! You can start at any time of the year to observe your tree during every season, giving you 365 days to enjoy and appreciate your tree. Prepare yourself for exciting projects, experiments, activities, opportunities, and much, much more! Some activities you will want to do yourself; sometimes you will want others to share in your fun.

Things you should know before getting started:

1. **Find your tree.** It should be close enough for you to visit often.
2. **You'll report your details and discoveries online.** At the end of every season, send all your work to the National Youth Gardening Chair, Cheri Kessen, at ckessen2001@yahoo.com
3. **Find your pace.** You don't have to do everything on the list each season, but try hard to do all you can. Put a check mark beside the ones you completed.
4. **Plan ahead.** Before going to visit your tree, make sure you have what you will need to take with you to complete your assignment.
5. **Show us!** Send us your drawings, poems and stories that you write.
6. **Make memories!** Maybe keep a Tree scrapbook of photos or diary to record your visits and what you saw.
7. **Be yourself!** Add anything you want, or try something different anytime during the correct season.
8. **Official Stuff.** The Gardeners of America needs signed permission from your parent or guardian to place pictures and names in promotional materials.

Parent/Guardian's name (Print) _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Circle: Parent or Guardian

Parent's Address _____

Parent's Phone _____ Email _____

We're excited to Meet Your Terrific Tree and hope you soon will be very excited, too. Let's get going!

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The Gardeners of America**



Meet My Terrific Tree!

My name is _____ Age _____

I named my tree _____

Where is it growing? _____

What kind of tree is it? _____

Tell us more about your tree.

Why did you pick this tree?

What do you like best about your Terrific Tree?

This project observes meteorological seasons. Meteorological spring is during March, April and May in the United States.

Meteorological Spring **March 1 – May 31**



A. Question Time!

1. Every state has a **State Tree, State Flower, State Bird** and many states have a **State Insect**.

- a. What is your State Tree?

- b. Do any other states have the same State Tree? Which ones?

- c. What is your State Flower and State Bird?

- d. Does your state have a State Insect?
What is it?



2. **Take a weekly walk around your Terrific Tree’s environment. How is the habitat changing?** The first sign of spring is when the trees develop buds. Keep a chart with dates of what you see and hear each week.

Date	Observation

3. **Spring is a very busy time for new life.** People sometimes take pine cones, mesh bags or plastic berry boxes and fill them with small scraps of material, 6 or more inches of yarn, ribbon, string and/or dryer lint. Then hang them by trees, on outside hooks or fence posts, etc. **Why are people doing this?**

(If you don’t know the answer, **try this project!** Put together one or more of the above items, stuff them in a pine cone, little box or mesh bag, then hang it on your Terrific Tree or close to it. Watch closely and explain what is going on and why.

4. Have you ever climbed into a tree house?

a. If not, would you like to? Why?



b. If yes, what was it like?

B. Weather trivia to know

1. Rain comes in different forms:

- **Rain** is water falling in drops.
- **Mist** is tiny, wet and cool drops you can feel.
- **Drizzle** is larger drops, but not much water falling.
- **Shower** is large drops falling into puddles.
- **Thunderstorm** brings water down in sheets, with wind blowing in strong gusts and jagged streaks of lightning followed by thunder. You can't see thunder, but you can hear it. Light travels faster than sound.

Thunder can't hurt us but lightning can! Never stand under a tree when it is lightning or in an open field if you are the tallest thing around! Lightning might strike **you**!

Experiment: How far away is the storm? When you see lightning, start counting: 1... 2... 3... 4... 5... Every 5 seconds = 1 mile. If you hear thunder AND see lightning, you are in the storm!



2. **Clouds** are groups of water drops or ice crystals.

- **Cirrus** (pronounced ['sir-əs](#)) are high above the Earth, where air is very cold. Cirrus clouds are thin, white wisps of ice crystals.
- **Nimbostratus** (pronounced [nim-bō-'strā-təs](#)) are dark, gray layers of raindrops making drizzle and showers.
- **Cumulonimbus** (pronounced ['kyü-myə-\(,\)lō-'nim-bəs](#)) are big, white, puffy clouds that move across the sky, forming shapes.
- **Thunderheads** are clouds that gather in groups, producing storms with flashing lightning and crashing thunder.

Weather Activity #1

Sit or lie down and watch the clouds drift across the sky overhead, forming shapes. Use your imagination! What do you see?

Weather Activity #2

When it is raining and the sun is shining or comes out at the same time, watch for a rainbow in the sky.



Draw and color the correct order for the rainbow: ROY G. BIV. First color the top of the rainbow red, followed by orange, then yellow. Green is the middle. Next is blue, then indigo (bluish-purple) and violet is at the bottom of the rainbow.

Weather Activity #3

Make your own rainbow: Stand outside with the sun behind you. Using a hose or spray bottle, aim the water up into the air. Use a plain, white piece of paper and a prism to break the light into a spectrum. If you do not have a prism, jewelry or window decorations will create the same effect. Search your house to see how many different rainbows you can find or make.

3. **Wind is air that is moving.** We can't see it but we **can** see things the wind moves. And we can feel it.

a. Flags show us how strong the wind is.

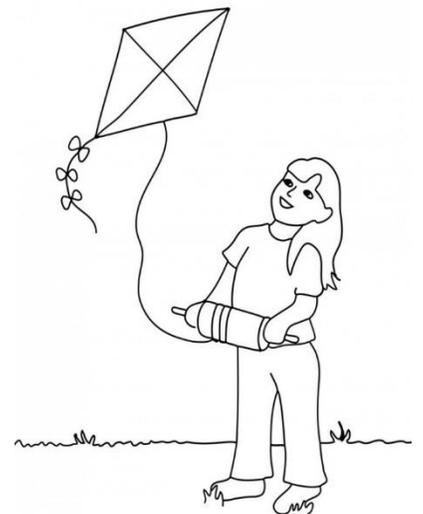
- Flag hanging, not moving = no wind
- Flag flapping and waving = windy
- Flag flying straight out from the pole = extremely windy

b. Wind socks tell how windy it is, too.

Your tree has a wonderful view of the clouds, and can feel the wind and enjoy the rain. Now you have some helpful information to guide you, too.

And now you know when it's best to fly a kite!

If you don't have a kite, you can make one; look online. Your tree will be so happy to watch you having fun. Please draw us a picture of your kite.



C. Tree rings tell their histories

1. Growth of trees

- Find a tree stump or a log that's been cut.
- Trees do not die in the winter; they just grow more slowly in the winter and fall. They grow fastest in spring and summer.
- Each ring of the stump has both a dark color (from slower growth) and a light color (from quicker growth).
- Wide rings indicate a good growing season; narrow rings indicate a poor growing season.
- Every year, a tree makes or grows one ring.

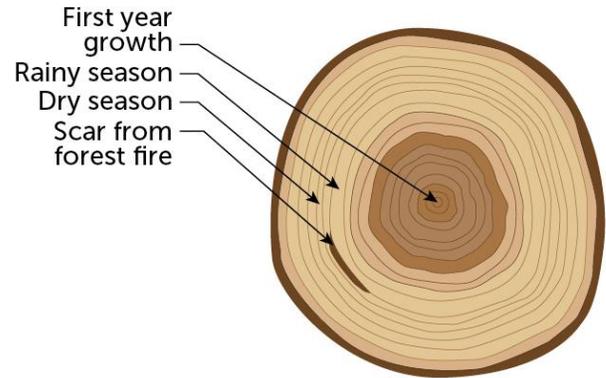


2. Age of trees

- To determine how old a tree is, you must count the rings.
- A ring is a circle of darker wood (old, hard, dead shell) that protects an inner, lighter layer of living wood.
- Begin at the very center (Do Not count the center, called the Pitch) and count outward, ring by ring.
- Count 1 dark and 1 light circle as one year's growth.

3. Climate history of trees

- On a very old tree, you can count back to see when historic events occurred, like floods, drought, insect attacks, fires, diseases and other significant events.
- Scientist can tell what was happening while a tree was growing ... the rings tell the tale.
- For example, a very narrow, light-colored ring means a drought occurred during the growing season. A dark scar across the ring indicates a fire occurred.



Tree Ring Activity #1

If you could not find a tree trunk or fallen log to see the rings, draw three circles of different sizes. Draw 3 to 5 rings around the Pitch (core) in one circle, 6 to 8 rings around the Pitch (core) in another and 9 to 12 rings around the Pitch (core) in the third one.

Now count the rings. How old is each tree?

Add clues in your drawing about what happened during those years. Maybe a fire? A drought? Disease? Tell us about it.

What would a very wet year look like on your ring drawing?



D. Gardening

1. Your Terrific Tree would be very happy if it could watch you work in a little garden or flower bed of your own. Can you find a place close to your Terrific Tree to plant your garden?
2. Containers like large pots or barrels or even a bale of straw make great beds for small gardens.

3. Quick-growing seeds that enjoy cold weather are radishes, peas and spinach. When it gets a little warmer, beans, marigolds and sunflowers are fun to plant and watch grow.
4. You can find all kinds of ideas and advice about gardens in books or on YouTube. And, you get to eat the results of your gardening!

Gardening Activity #1

If you plant seeds in your garden, make simple plant markers with popsicle sticks. Label the sticks with the name of your seed or plant and use a thin-line marker to draw a little picture of the vegetable, herb or plant. Make sure to put a marker by everything you plant.

Gardening Activity #2

If you have a larger area for your garden, make a scarecrow to scare critters away from eating vegetables. Start with an old broom or shovel handle. Stuff an old pair of jeans or pants and a long-sleeved shirt with newspaper or straw. Use old gloves or straw for hands and old shoes or straw for feet.

Stuff a brown paper bag with straw or newspaper for the head and draw a face on the plain side of the bag. Use yarn or straw for hair and top with an old hat.

Close the bottom of the sack with yarn or rope, cut a slit in the upper leg next to the crotch and mount the scarecrow on the pole. Name your scarecrow and draw a picture of it or have someone take a picture of you and your scarecrow.



E. Special Spring Events

1. St. Patrick's Day is March 17

Plan ahead to celebrate with family, friends, neighbors ...

- a. Make **green shamrock invitations** to the celebration. Leave the back of the shamrock blank. Using a hole punch, make a hole in your paper invitation and tie yarn, string or ribbon through the hole. When you give the invitations to your guests, ask them to put their name on the back and to wear something green to the celebration.
- b. Do you know how to do an **Irish jig**? Look it up online and then practice, practice, practice!
- c. March 17, take your guests to wish your Terrific Tree a Happy St. Patrick's Day! Hopefully, you'll all be a-wearin' o' the green. Maybe you've found a green leprechaun hat to wear.
- d. It's time to lead your guests in an Irish jig around your Terrific Tree! Be patient as you slowly show your guests how to do the Irish jig. Wave your shamrock invitations as you jig!
- e. Tired of jiggling and laughing? Hang the invitations on your Terrific Tree or nearby so your Terrific Tree can enjoy them!



Tell us about your St. Patrick's Day celebration:

- What do you think your Terrific Tree thought about what was happening?

- What do you think your Terrific Tree enjoyed the most at the celebration?
- Did you add anything more to your celebration?



St. Patrick's Day Activity

Have you ever found a **4-leaf clover**? This is a great time to search for 4-leaf clover in your yard. Most clover is 3-leaf, like a shamrock. You're lucky if you find 4-leaf clover!

2. Easter is April 4

- Read [*The Egg Tree*](#) picture book about a very special egg hunt by Katherine Milhous (1992).
- Decorate plastic eggs and hang them in or close to your Terrific Tree and fill them with feed for birds.** You could use stickers, or felt pens or paint for your decorations. Tape or glue yarn, string or ribbon to the inside of one half of the plastic shell so it can hang from low branches or near your Terrific Tree.
- Make birds for your Terrific Tree** out of plastic eggs. Draw a pattern for wings, tail and beak on construction paper. Cut out the shapes leaving a ¼-inch edge on the bottom of the wings, beak and tail. Glue the wings partially inside the eggs. Cut string or ribbon long enough to glue or tape one end of it to the inside of one of the egg halves. Tie the other end to your Terrific Tree. Fold and glue the ¼" margin under the tail and beak to the egg. With a marker, draw eyes on your bird.



3. Earth Day is April 22

Earth Day is celebrated every year to remind us how we all can help take better care of our Earth. Everyone can:

- **Recycle** – What have you recycled?

- **Reduce** – How can you cut down on things you throw away in the trash?

- **Reuse** – Tell us how you can turn something you no longer want into something different and useful.

- **Save water** – Give two examples. (Hint: While brushing your teeth, turn off the faucet until you are ready to rinse.)
 - 1.
 - 2.

- **Clean air** – Give two examples. (Hint: Walk or ride your bike instead of riding in a car.)
 - 1.
 - 2.

- **Don't waste electricity** – Give two examples. (Hint: Turn off the lights when you leave a room.)
 - 1.
 - 2.

- **Don't litter the environment** – Give two examples. (Hint: Put your chewed gum in the trash, not under your desk.)
 - 1.
 - 2.

What can you do to protect endangered plants and animals?

What can you do to prevent forest fires?



Search the internet for other ideas, projects and stories you could do to protect our Earth. Tell us about something you learned that might be fun and smart to do. You might begin at the official **Earth Day** website, www.earthday.org.



4. **Arbor Day** (When is Arbor Day celebrated in your state?)

Arbor Day was first celebrated in on April 10, 1872 in Nebraska, where pioneers began planting trees on the bare plains to break the wind's fury, hold soil in place for their crops, and to provide fuel and building materials and shade from the blazing sun.

Prizes were offered for the largest number of properly planted trees on Arbor Day. It is estimated more than 1 million trees were planted in Nebraska on that first Arbor Day.

Today, Arbor Day is celebrated in all 50 states. Learn more on the website of **Arbor Day Foundation** at www.arborday.org.

Arbor Day Celebrations can take many forms. Here are some ideas:

- Hold an Arbor Day concert of songs about trees or with tree names in their titles.

- Ask older people how they celebrated Arbor Day when they were children.
- Hold a poster contest advertising Arbor Day.
- Promote a paper drive: Gather newspaper and other papers for recycling to save a tree.
- Organize an Arbor Day Fair in your neighborhood.
- Find and play games or puzzles that feature trees.



Arbor Day Activity #1

What events would you hold at an Arbor Day Celebration?

Arbor Day Activity #2

Unscramble the letters below to spell 15 well-known trees.

1. ppeal _____
2. totcnodwoo _____
3. inpe _____
4. pamel _____
5. liowl _____
6. amlp _____
7. raecd _____
8. oknggi _____
9. lme _____
10. ricbh _____
11. dleer _____
12. caymsroe _____
13. dewodro _____
14. senpa _____
15. tawlnu _____



Arbor Day Activity #3

Celebrate Arbor Day in a personal way by planting a new Terrific Tree by yourself. **You can do it!**

- Start a tree seed in a cup or a seedling in a pot.
- If it is a sapling, unpack the tree, tease out its roots and soak it in water for 6 -12 hours. Remove any packing material from the roots and make sure the roots do not dry out.
- Dig a hole wider than seems necessary, so the roots can spread out without crowding. Dig out any grass within about a 3- foot circular area.
- Plant the tree an inch or so deeper than it's pot, again, so you do not crowd the roots. They need lots of room to stretch out and grow! Partially fill the hole with soil, firmly packing the soil around the lower roots. Do not add peat or bark.
- Shove the remaining soil into the hole around your tree, packing it firmly with your heel. Leave a basin around the tree to catch water. Give the tree plenty of water.
- Pour protective mulch, such as wood chips or peat moss, around the base after water has soaked in.
- Water the tree generously every week to 10 days the first year. Fertilize soon after planting.

Arbor Day Activity #3

Have you ever tried to write a poem? Below is perhaps the most famous poem ever written about trees. Now you try to write a poem about trees, maybe about your Terrific Tree.

Trees

By Joyce Kilmer

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.



Spring Summary

1. Summer is ending and it's time to **send in your report, by May 31**. Send it to Cheri Kessen, the TGOA National Youth Gardening Chair, at ckessen2001@yahoo.com
2. Have you collected your spring leaf and pressed it?
3. Did you do anything extra on your own? Tell us about it!
4. Tell us three things you learned doing the spring Meet My Terrific Tree.
5. What did you enjoy the most about the spring Meet My Terrific Tree?