

Activity: Plant Time Machine

Gather your journaling supplies and head outside in your yard, or to a nearby natural area. Try to find an area with lots of flowers of the same type, a field with lots of weedy flowers is best. Or maybe you have a bush or tree that's blooming in your yard. If you only have a single flower to look at, you can do this activity across time instead of space. Just be sure to date your drawings and note the weather over subsequent days.

- 1) Choose a single flower to focus on that is in "peak bloom" (fully open petals). Make a careful diagram or sketch of this flower in the middle of your page, along with any observation notes. Work accurately but also quickly, spend about 7 minutes on your sketch.
- 2) Next, find a different flower of the same species that is a little older (further developed) than your first one. Quickly draw it to the right of your first sketch, be sure to jot down any notes or questions. Then find a different flower that is a little younger (less open) than your initial drawing, and draw it to the left. Continue trying to find increasingly older flowers, and then increasingly younger flowers, and sketch them on either side of your initial drawing to create a timeline. See if you can find the youngest (all the way back to buds if you can find them) and oldest stages (maybe even producing a fruit) of your species of flower! Spend about 20 additional minutes observing flowers in different stages of development and documenting them on your plant timeline.

Consider setting up your journaling page(s) like this. You may need to use multiple pages. Leave plenty of space for additional sketches along the timeline on either side of peak bloom:



- 3) Look back over your sketches in your timeline. Did anything surprise you about how the flower developed?

This activity was originally created as part of the *"Opening your World Through Nature Journaling"* curriculum created by John Muir Laws et al. and the California Native Plant Society. You can access this curriculum and others for free here:

<https://johnmuirlaws.com/journaling-curriculum/>