

WILD FAMILIES

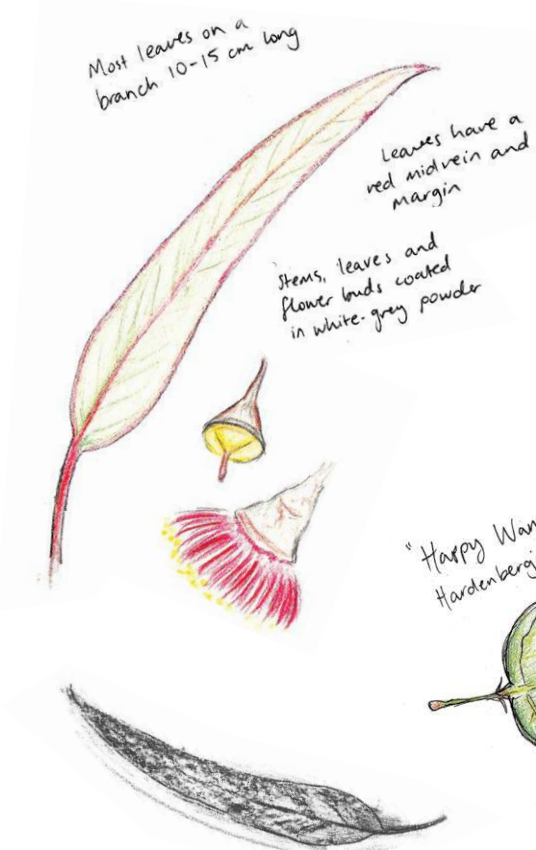


Loving, learning about and looking after nature

Lovely leaves

This activity is a chance for you and your family to try out being botanists (scientists who study plants) by getting to know some of the different leaves around you. These leaves could be near home, in the bush, in the school yard or park. Simply find a leaf (or many) and use the questions and activities below to get you looking closely at your leaf, just like a botanist would. You may wish to grab some paper, pencils and/or crayons to record your discoveries on some of these activities.

1. Create a drawing of your leaf, include the bumps, jagged edges, patterns and different shades or colours. Some ideas for doing this include:
 - a. Trace around the edge of your leaf
 - b. Do a leaf rubbing using crayons and admire the textures and shape
 - c. Try a free hand drawing
 - d. Paint your leaf
 - e. Use labels to name the different parts of your leaf
2. How many colours and shades are on your leaf? Is it the same colour on both sides?



3. What patterns can you see in the veins?
4. How long is your leaf?
Longer than your fingernail?
Longer than your finger?
Longer than your arm?
5. What does your leaf feel like?
6. Is there anything living on your leaf?



Illustrations by
Nicole Mertens



Cool things about leaves

A leaf is an 'organ' of a plant. Its job is to create food for the plant to give it energy to grow and reproduce.

Even leaves on the ground are important in the bush. They create what is known as leaf litter. The leaf litter protects the soil and provides habitat for tiny animals.

In wet forests and rainforests, leaves provide 'shade umbrellas' for the forest below. This helps keep the forest moist.

Leaves on mallee trees are usually very tough and leathery to keep them from drying out. This is because they grow in very dry places and need to hold on to as much water as they can.

Leaves from the bush are used by wildlife for all sorts of things. They can be used for food, nests, a place to lay eggs, warmth and shelter.



"Blanket Leaf"
Bedfordia arborescens

7. What evidence can you see that an animal could have visited your leaf? What type of animal could it have been?

8. What type of plant did your leaf come from? Was it a tree, a grass, a bush? Something else?

9. How many other leaves do you think are on your plant? Count, guess or approximate!

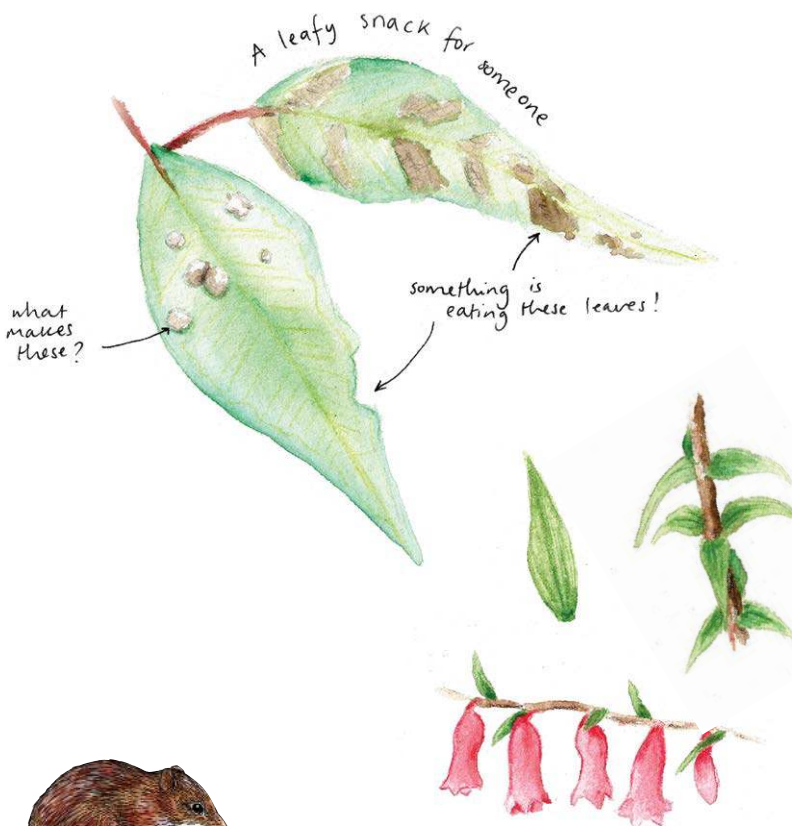
10. Is there a pattern to the way the leaves grow on your plant? Do they grow all the way around a stem, or on opposite sides of the stem?

11. Why is your leaf important for your plant?

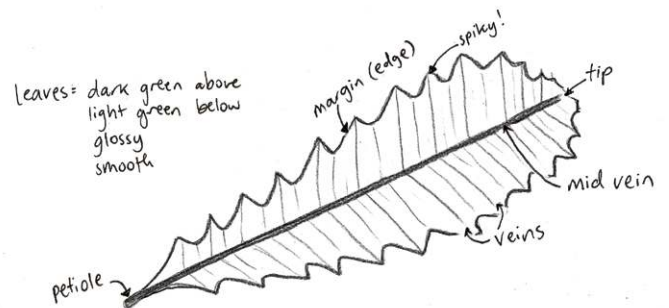
12. Who or what else might your leaf be important to?



A rough, lumpy leaf
"Hazel Pomaderris"
Pomaderris aspera



"Common heath"
Epacris impressa



"Saw-sedge Banksia"
Banksia serrata



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