

Tree Bud Observations Activity

For this week's activity, now that trees are starting to send out new leaves, let's be scientists, and make observations about the process. Let's also record our findings in a journal so that we can revisit them.



What is a bud?

A **bud** is a small bump or growth on a stem or branch where new growth is about to happen. This new growth may be a leaf, flower, cone or shoot. On woody plants, like trees, buds are hard. They have tough scales on them that form a water-proof case that protects the new life that is inside it. On other plants, buds may be very hairy, or may be naked, with no covering at all. In spring, this new growth will break through the bud and flower. Then, in the summertime, trees will develop their new buds for the next year. Did you know we actually eat some buds? Cabbage and Brussel sprouts are examples of buds we eat!



Activity:

Go for a walk or take a look in your backyard for a tree to study, bringing a journal with you. Once you find your perfect tree, take a close look at its branches. Can you find a bud?

Once you do, make a drawing of your bud. What does it look like? How big is your bud? Is it round or elongated? What colour is it? How does it feel? How does it smell? Try to note as many details as you can about your bud. Imagine you need to describe it to someone from outer space, who has never seen a bud before! You'll need as many details as possible.

Take note of where your bud is growing on the branch. If it is growing at the end, it is called a terminal bud. If it is growing along the side, right next to a leaf stem, it is called a lateral, or an axillary bud. Is your bud growing by itself, or as part of a pair, or in a little bunch?

Now make a hypothesis, or scientific guess: what type of new growth do you think will grow from that bud? A leaf, a flower, a cone or a shoot? Imagine what this new growth will look like – what shape and colour do you think it will be? Write down as much description as you can about how you think this will look.

Repeat this activity for another tree along your walk or in your yard. Then try it for a different kind of plant. Make sure to remember the exact trees and plants you picked so that you can revisit them. Later this week, you should go back to your trees and plants and make some more notes about your buds. Have they opened further? Do you see any changes?

Happy Exploring!