



Looking at Spring

You're on a Quest!

Spring means the blooming of flowers, the return of birds, and the greening of the countryside. In this take-home activity, you will be exploring one of these phenomena with family members and friends. You will record your observations in a notebook, and at a later date create a calendar of spring to share with others.

■ **Take a closer look at a springtime classic.** Pick some daffodils, or buy them at a local market. Look at the shape of the daffodil flower. Using a book on flowers, identify the parts you can see from the outside. Now, dissect the daffodil. With a very sharp knife or razor blade, carefully cut the flower in half all the way down to the stem. Lay the two halves side by side. Notice how similar the two sides are; they are almost mirror images. (Not all flowers are so symmetrical!) Using your flower guide, identify the various parts that you can now see.



■ **Take a spring wildflower walk.** In early spring, just as the grass is turning green, take a flower guide and a magnifying glass, and go for a nature walk. How many wildflowers can you see and identify? Using the magnifying glass observe the various parts of each different flower. Can you find species that have different shapes and symmetry? Return to the woods during different stages of spring – just as the trees flower, just as the leaves unfurl.

■ **Look at flowering trees in early spring.** Trees often have male and female flowers. They are usually wind-pollinated, but some are insect-pollinated. Can you see any differences in the design of flowers that are wind-pollinated rather than insect-pollinated? Watch these trees through the season to see when their flowers bloom, and identify how they are pollinated. Try to discover which insects are most important in your neighborhood.

■ **Create a calendar of the coming of spring.** Record the progression of species and their flowering dates. Note the arrival of birds by watching a bird feeder, or listening to bird songs in early morning. Even if species cannot be identified by song, note the increase in the variety of species as the weeks progress. Share your calendar with family, friends and classmates.



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