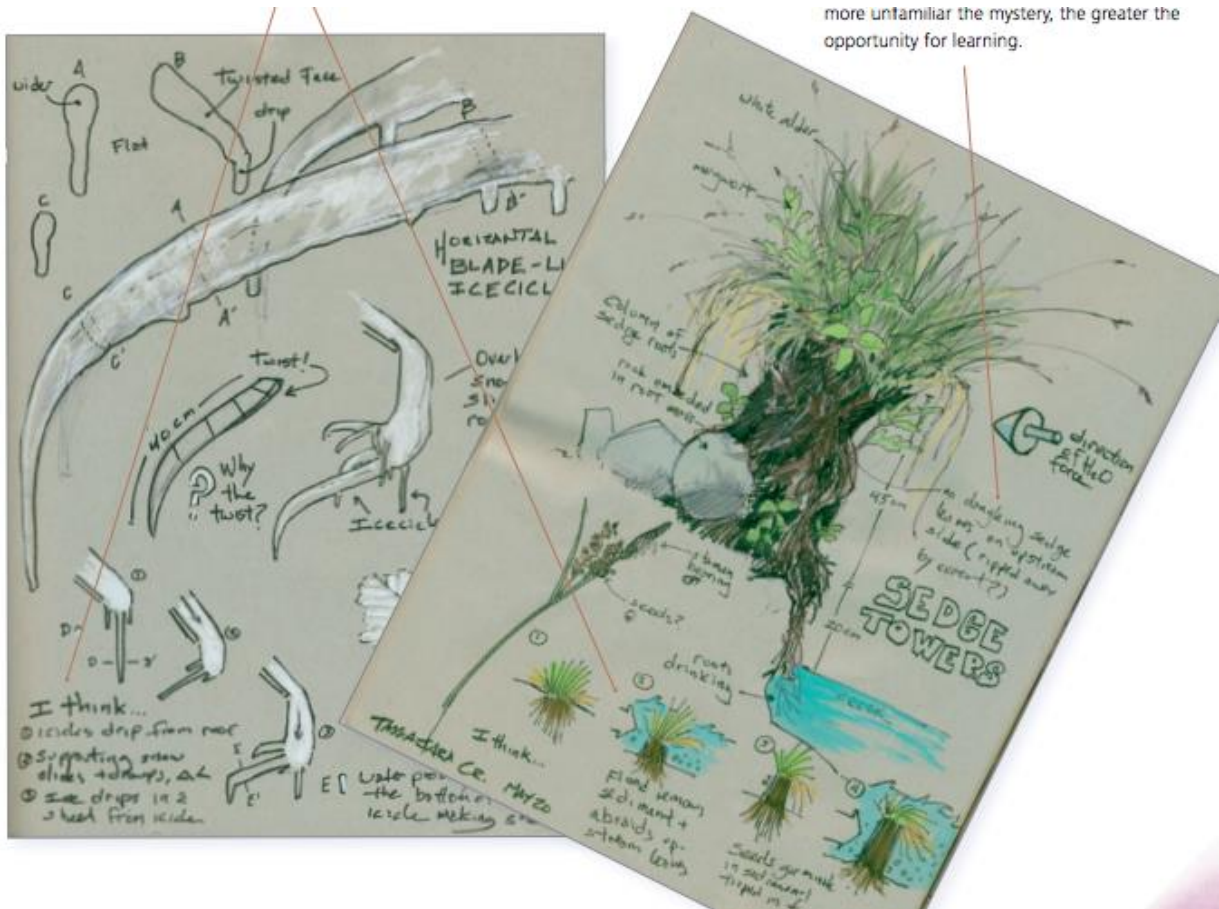


# Nature Journaling

adapted for Mountain Top Arboretum by Xander Prince from *How To Teach Nature Journaling* by John Muir Laws.



more unfamiliar the mystery, the greater the opportunity for learning.



## WHY USE A NATURE JOURNAL?

- To slow down, pay attention, and experience awe and wonder
- To develop students' creativity and critical thinking skills
- To develop students' science identity through authentic science practices
- To nurture connection with nature
- To build an inclusive culture of curiosity in the family or classroom
- To support interdisciplinary learning

## ELEMENTS OF A NATURE JOURNAL

### Pictures

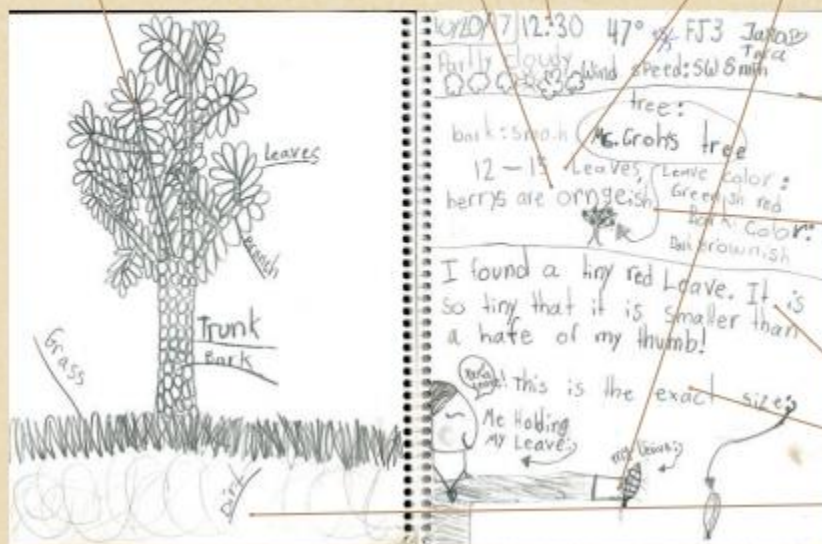
- Icons to show weather
- Drawings at different scales

### Observations, Ideas, and Thinking

- Comprehensive metadata
- Notes about colors

### Numbers

- Objects are counted
- Scale is shown with relative size



### Structure and Layout

- Lines separate the page into sections
- Arrows connect words and text

### Words

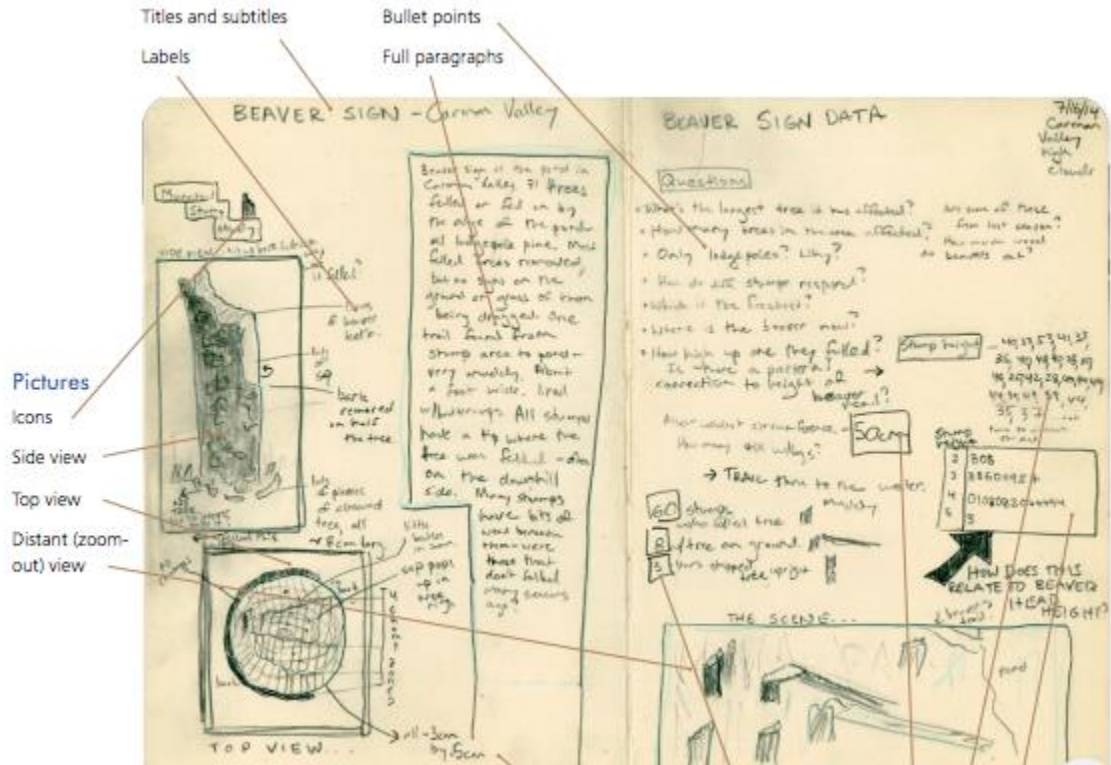
- Observations are recorded in
- Full paragraphs
  - Short sentences or fragments
  - Labels

### Getting started:

1. Find/make a designated Nature Journal.
2. Use colored pencils to add more detail.
3. Bring a ruler with you for measurements.
4. Nature is broad! Choose a subject - stones, trees, a leaf, water, flowering plants, your backyard, a defined area or whatever you are drawn to that day.
5. Include drawings, words, numbers, arrows, diagrams.
6. Start with prompts such as "I Notice...", "I wonder.." "It reminds me of..."



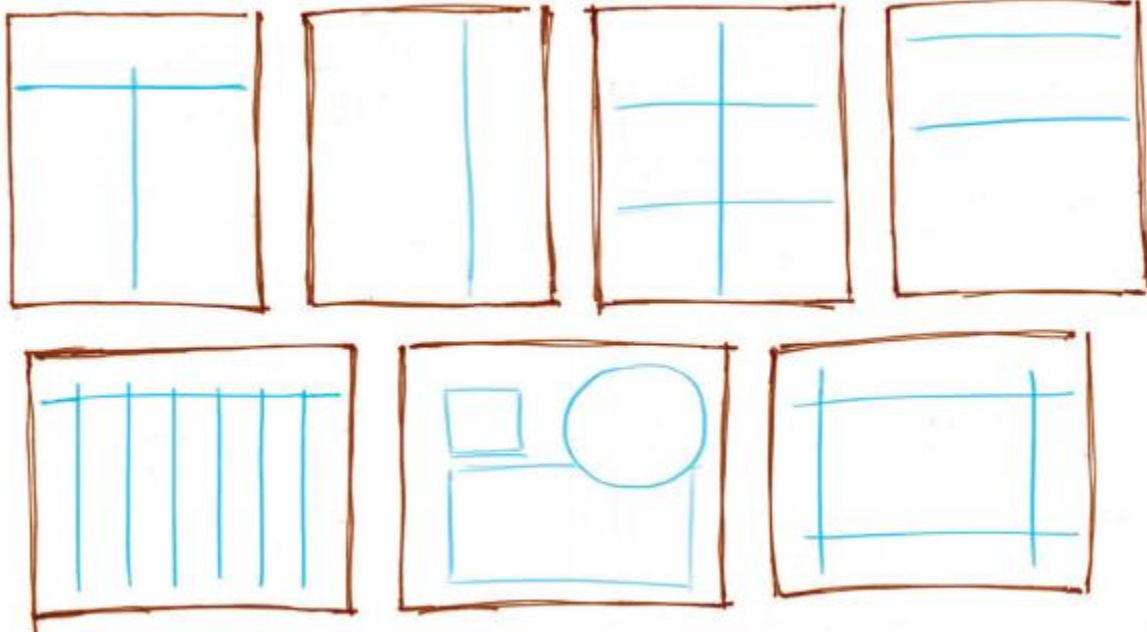
7. Include metadata on each page or entry, including date, weather, location, etc.
8. De-emphasize pretty pictures. It's about recording an observation not necessarily making something beautiful.



9. Allow space for personal notes, reflections, poetry and creative writing to create deeper memories of your observations.
10. Include questions you have, sounds you hear, ideas about the future of your observation.

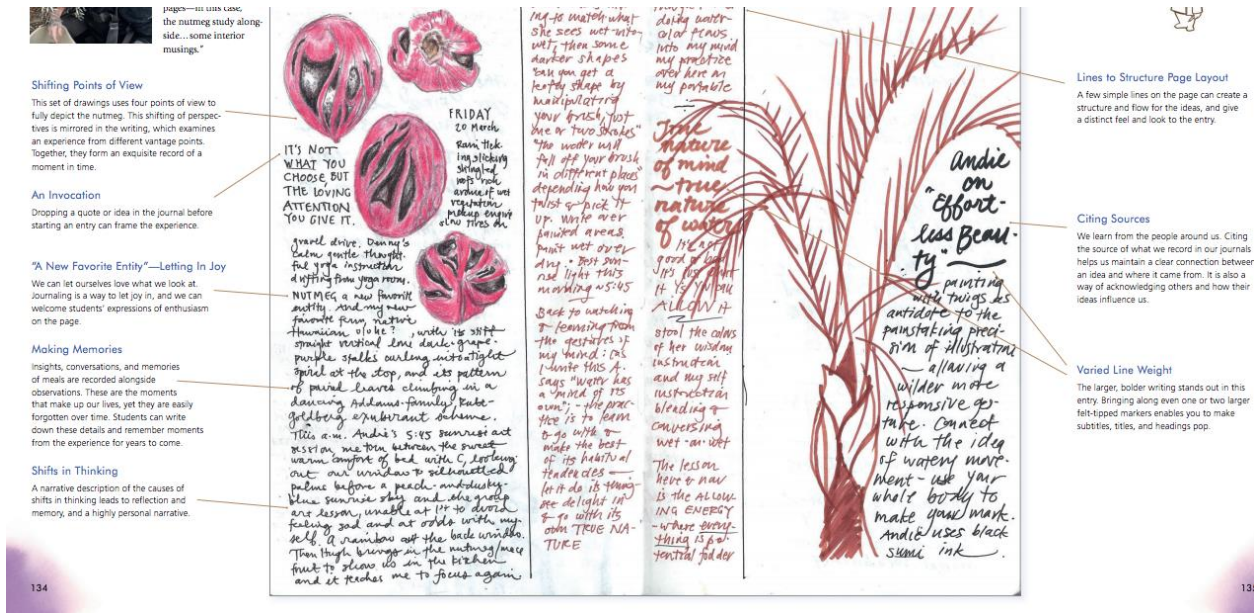
## Drawing Tips

1. Divide your page to make it more manageable



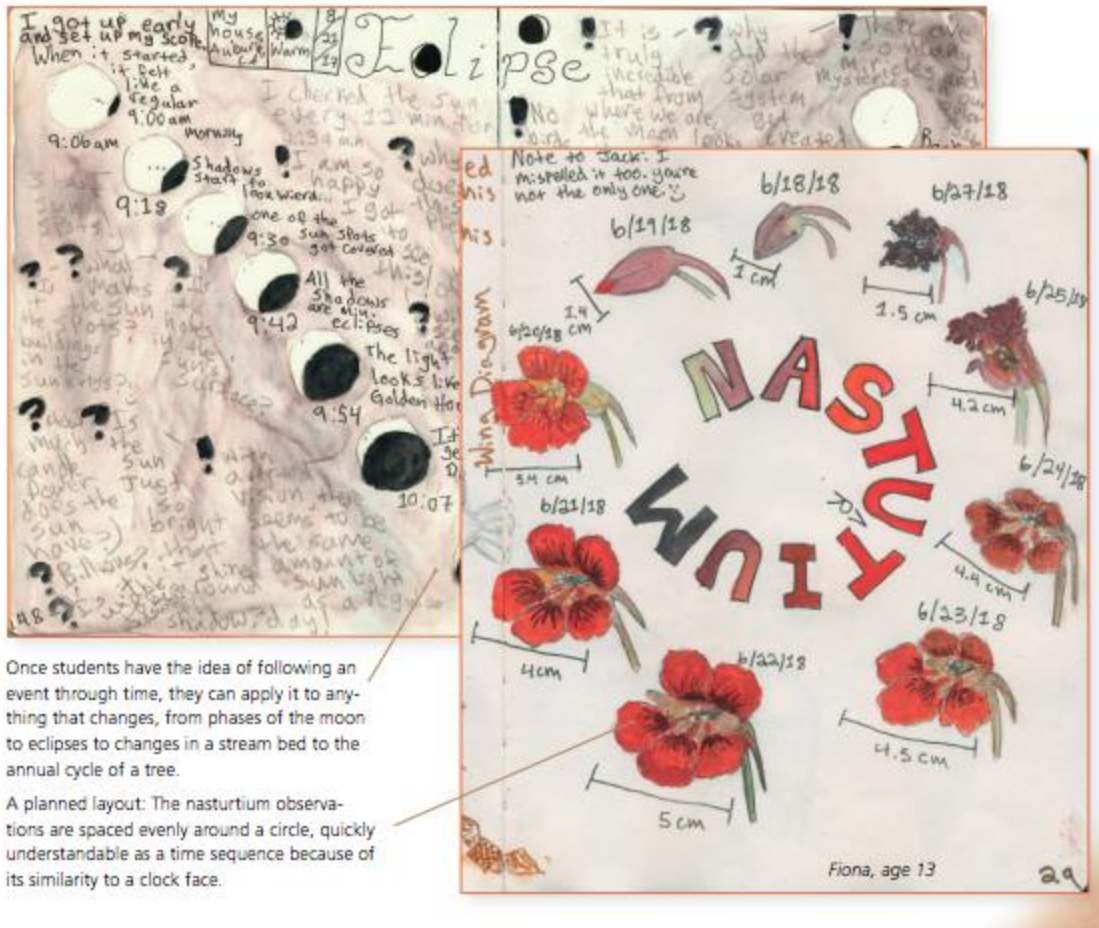
Encourage students to play with different layouts and think ahead of time about page structure.

2. Begin by lightly sketching the rough shape of your observation. Refine the shape then move on to details.
3. Avoid the eraser, draw lightly at first and draw over to change your image.
4. Look, and look again! Continue to observe your subject while you draw. Do not become attached to how you think it looks.
5. Remember that drawing improves with practice.



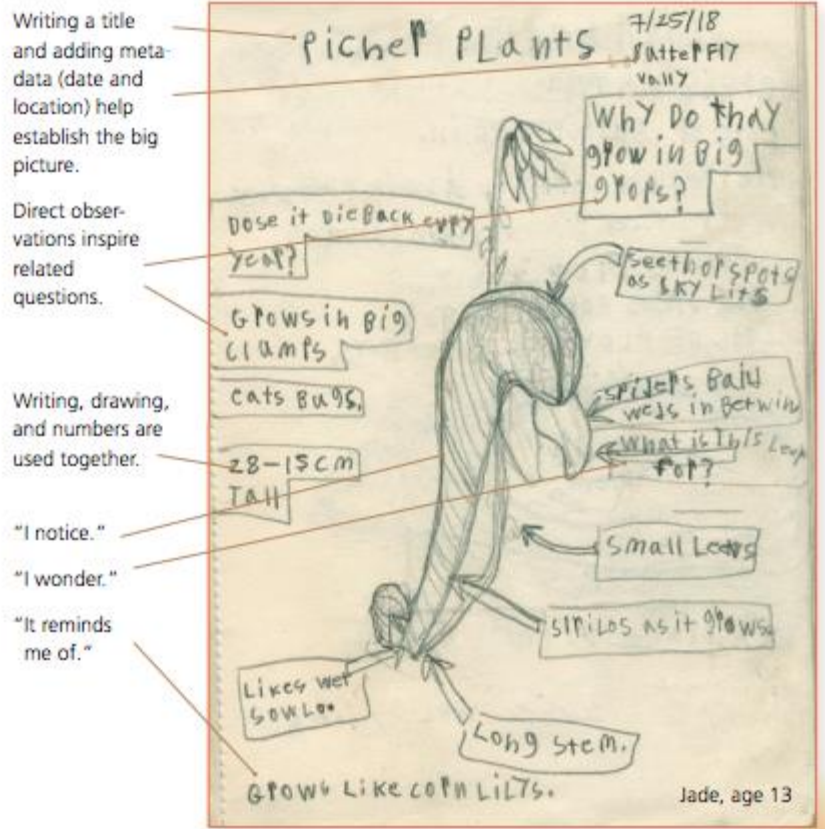
**Activity Ideas and Tips**

1. Start with I notice, I wonder, It reminds me of. I notice leads to an observation, which is something perceived through the senses like sight, smell, touch, hearing, or taste. It is not an opinion about or an identification of an object.” Ie, ‘I notice the veins stick out of the surface of the leaf’ or ‘I notice the side of the leaf feels sharp. ‘I wonder’ leads to questions and ‘It reminds me of’ makes connections.
2. Side by Side Comparisons. Choose two things that are similar and observe both with a diagram to draw out the differences and similarities
3. Revisit the same object each day for a week, or each week of a month. Ie. Observe how a flower forms, blooms and decays.



4. Perspectives - Observe the same subject in three different ways -- Zoom in, Life Size and More Distant.
5. Make a map of an area small or large. Include captions and headings.
6. Section off an area, 2'x2' and study it like a tiny world, what do you see?
7. Start with a quote or phrase from a favorite book or poem to frame your experience.
8. Make a treasure map of things you find along a trail, using dotted lines between the treasures. Share your map with someone and see if they can follow it.
9. Sit Spots - Stop and choose a spot to sit, observe around you and write whatever words come to mind. Add drawings. Use the "I notice, I wonder, it reminds me of" prompts. Continue to visit the same spot, either throughout the day for 5 minutes or more, or make repeated visits to the same spot over the course of a week or more. Notice your changing response to a place or time or what new objects or feelings you notice.
10. Draw cross-sections of landscapes or objects such as fruit or mushrooms. Observe these in your journal through drawings, words and numbers.
11. Later, at home, include photographs or clippings to add a collage-element to your observations.





This guide was adapted from *How To Teach Nature Journaling* by John Muir Laws.

Purchase/Download the entire e-book here:

[How to Teach Nature Journaling \(Print and free PDF download\) - John Muir Laws](#)