

a voice
for the natural
landscaping
movement



Reprinted from the
Wild Ones Journal,
Nov/Dec 1996 issue.

For more information, or to join
Wild Ones Natural Landscapers,
here's how to reach us:

Phone

(920) 730-3986
(877) 394-3954 (Toll-Free)

Mail

PO Box 1274
Appleton, WI 54912-1274

E-Mail

ExecDirector@wildones.org

WebSite

www.wildones.org

Celebrating natives
plant and natural
landscapes
since 1979.

If You Want Your Child to Keep a Journal

By Babette Kis – Milwaukee-North (WI) Chapter

If you want your child to keep a journal...let her or him watch you make journal entries.

Ask your preschooler what you should write about. After you finish your entry, read it to your child. If your child is older, combine journal writing with summer camp, field trips, and nature study.



Middle and high school students often do well with small notebooks like those adults use, but for younger children, ages 6 to 11, an 8-1/2 x 11 spiral bound notebook often works better. Younger children I have worked with don't like to draw on lined paper. If your child doesn't, consider buying a spiral bound book that has lined paper and drawing spaces on each page.

You can also make a personalized journal for your child. On the cover, include your child's name, the year, and a description such as "Summer Journal," "Nature Journal," "Summer Adventure," "Plant and Animal Stories," etc. Let your child help choose the title of the journal and the color of the cover. Calculate the number of pages your child's journal will have by multiplying the number of times per week your child will write by the number of weeks or months the journal will be used. Twenty to 30 pages should do for a season. My summer class of second and third graders wrote in journals like these once a week. Design or buy pages that have space for your child's name, the date, the location, and observations/notes and a picture. After you finish your cover and sample page, have the journal duplicated and spiral bound at a quick-print shop.



Journal keeping is most interesting during late spring through fall, so you may want to start during this period. In your yard or a nature area close to home, ask your child to point out birds, butterflies, bees, caterpillars, flowers or other plants and animals. While you and your child are looking at plants you may ask: Do they live in sun or in shade? Are they short or tall? When do they bloom? How do the flowers and leaves feel? How do they smell? For animals: What are they doing? Is there more than one? Are they quick or slow? Are they out all the time, of only at a certain time of day? Are they hunters or are they prey? Where do you think they live?

After one or two of these field trips, the children I have worked with usually decide what they want to write, without prompting. Each time she's outside my 6-year-old writes one or two sentences and draws a picture. Give second-graders and older children note-taking rules. My third and sixth graders are required to write at least one paragraph containing at least four sentences for each journal entry. I re-

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

view everybody's writing after she or he has finished an entry, or once a week, depending upon the child's age. I don't correct their sentences and spelling errors. I do ask them to explain vague sentences or logic. And, I tell them they have sharp eyes when they state little known facts. Every two weeks I require my older children to chose one of their entries and write a page about it. To do this, they may have to make additional observations or use reference material. They write a draft, correct their spelling errors and sentences and arrange sentences into paragraphs. I encourage them to include pictures, graphs, lists, sketches, or other information in their report.

At the end of the summer, I congratulate all of the children on a job well-done. We read our favorite stories out loud to each other. In fall, I store my own children's summer journals in a box in the attic. Over time these journals will weather and wrinkle, like my childhood journals did. And, when my children leave, their journals will be waiting, should they wish to take them.



Grapevine beetle and giant swallowtail drawings by Babette Kis.