

My Special Spot in Winter

by:

tremendous trees

You probably know that many trees lose their leaves in the winter, they are called deciduous trees. When that happens it becomes easier to see their branches and the different shapes they make. Find a tree you like in or around your Special Spot and try to draw the negative space around the branches. Negative space is the area and between solid objects. So, not the branches themselves, but the space around them. This is trickier than it sounds! Younger friends may want to just focus on the shapes.

beneath your feet

Make a note of all the plants that you can see in and around your Special Spot. How many are still growing (evergreen), how many are dormant (deciduous) and how many are only observable based on seed heads or bits of leftover dead plant? Think about the vast network of living roots growing under you dormant, but alive, waiting for the right moment to come back to life, the buds waiting all winter to open.

Hypothesize where dormant plants will sprout in the spring. Draw a simple map on the top third of your page showing where dormant plants are and where you expect them to sprout. Now think about the world underground that you cannot directly observe. Begin to map out what the root systems might look like, the depth they grow to, the distance they spread and how they interact.

Imagine what all of that stored up energy looks and feels like. Think of a creative way to draw or symbolize it on your root map. It can be as realistic or fanciful as you want. Think about how you feel when you have a project or idea simmering below the surface and try and express that in your drawing.

(Resource: check out the Wurzel Atlas, a collection of scientific drawings of the root systems of 1000+ plants)

Sketch or write the names of plants/ seeds/ buds you'd like to look up later more for information:

Beautiful Buds

Buds are the promise of spring deep in the winter! Did you know that trees and shrubs grow their buds for in the late summer and fall? That means you can observe them all winter long as they sleep, just waiting for the right moment to start growing again. Inside each bud is all of the tissue it needs to become a shoot, a leaf or a flower. They are wrapped up in bud scales which are thick warm modified leaves that protect the tender buds. Find some buds in your Special Spot and imagine what their long winter nap is like. How do you think they know when it's time to start growing again? You can use buds to identify bare trees (there are many free guides online- find one that is specific to your area) and you can also use the buds to see how much a tree grew in it's last year. Locate the terminal bud (the one on the end of the branch) and then look for a horizontal mark on the branch where last year's terminal bud was. Measure the distance with a ruler or a non-standard unit of measurement like a rock or stick. Did the tree grow more or less than you expected? In your journal, draw some of the buds you find and either try to identify them, measure their growth or write a story about their winter nap.

Rocks

Search all around your Special Spot for the best rocks. Look at the small rocks, the big rocks, shiny ones, mossy ones and everything in between. Excavate some from the snow if there is snow on the ground. Draw your favorites here in your journal. Gently try to write with any that seem a little crumbly or soft- do any leave a mark on the page? Could you draw with them? Use a field guide to try and identify your finds and write any interesting facts you learn with the pictures and the name of the rock.

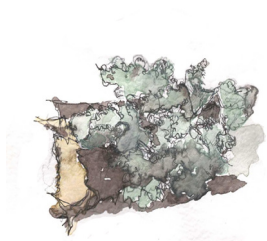
Lovely Lichen

Lichen is always there, but gets much easier to spot in the winter when the trees lose their leaves and plants die back. Lichens are a composite organism made up of fungi and algae living symbiotically. (In harmony) There are three main types: Foliose, Fruticose and Crustose.

Foliose lichens have two easily distinguishable sides. They can be very flat, leafy like lettuce, or full of ridges and bumps.

Fruticose lichens can be hair-like, shrubby, or cup-like. Usnea and pixie cups are two examples.

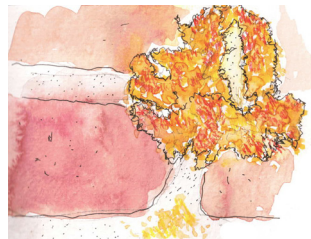
Crustose lichens form a flat crust over a surface-- like a boulder, the soil, or your roof shingles. They come in bright vibrant colors, as well as grays and greens.



Foliose



Fruticose



Crustose

Draw a lichen shape or a circle (whatever color the lichen is) on the “stick” below for each specimen you find in or around your special spot. Grab a field guide from a library to help you ID finds you aren’t sure about.



Foliose



Fruticose



Crustose