

# Connecting Kids to Nature

Nature is a great teacher and getting kids outside to learn and play is good for their brains and their bodies. Try this outdoor activity from Project Learning Tree® - it's safe, fun, and educational!

## Bursting Buds

In early spring, the tiny, bright green leaves of many trees burst forth. Where do the leaves come from? How do they form? In this activity, children will find the answers to these questions through observation and research.

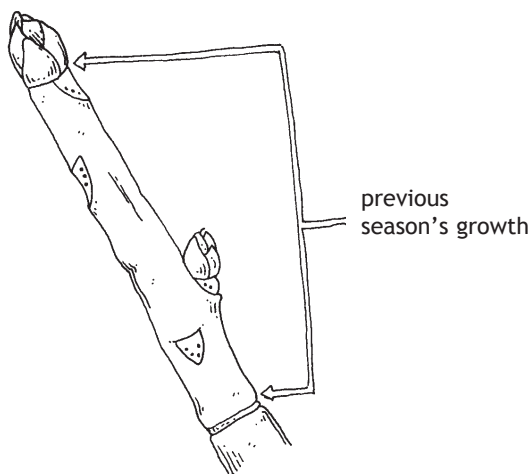
The Spring is a wonderful time to go outside. When walking through a wooded area, take a moment to draw attention to tree twigs and branches. Have children search for buds and then choose a single twig to study. Have them:

- Hold the branch for examination
- Point out the different features they can see
- Gently split open a bud and examine the leaves tucked inside

Explain that tree twigs have different identifiable parts. Children could use a digital camera- or sketchbook-to record what they see. Back indoors, have children draw a picture of their twig and then use the internet or a tree identification guide to label the different parts. Finally, ask children how they think buds change into leaves. One week later, go outside again to the same tree so children can see the change.

For a children's science book about the structure and purpose of leaves, check out *How Leaves Change* by Sylvia A. Johnson, published by Lerner Publications, 1989, ISBN: 0822595133.

Can you identify the terminal bud; side bud; leaf scars; bud scale scar?



Do this word search puzzle to discover some components of a branch. Look below for the answers.



Answers: bark; branch; bud; flower; leaf; node; pith; sap; scales; scar; shoot; stem; thorn; twig

### Did You Know?

By the time a tree's leaves drop in the fall, its leaves for the next spring are already formed. Tiny leaves, stems, and sometimes flowers are located in packages called buds. Buds are made of tough scales that form a waterproof case. In spring, sap rises from the roots to the branches; the scales fall off the buds; and the tree's leaves, stems, and flowers unfurl and grow. During the summer, the tree begins to develop new buds for the following year.

### Make Learning Fun!

Encourage your child's school to incorporate learning outdoors.

For more activity ideas and materials:

- Attend a PLT workshop, [www.plt.org/state-network/](http://www.plt.org/state-network/)
- Visit [shop.plt.org](http://shop.plt.org)



Project Learning Tree® (PLT) is an initiative of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

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