PLANTS - SCIENTIFIC LEAF DRAWING

Accurate observation skills are crucial to correctly identifying plants. Often you need to pay attention to really small details. Find a leaf in your garden and look closely at it. Use a hand lens or magnifier if you've got one. Try drawing the leaf scientifically. This means drawing exactly what you see and adding labels to explain the features. Include labels for what it feels like, where it was growing, how big it was... If you want you could try adding a scale bar to show the size accurately. The questions below will help you know which features are important for identifying leaves.

What is the overall shape? Leaves come in many shapes, they could be rounded, spoon-shaped, pointed-tipped etc.

Is it a simple or a compound leaf? Simple leaves have just 1 leaf on a stalk, compound leaves have many

Does it have 'leaflets' ? These are segments of bigger leaves that sometimes look like mini-leaves

What does it feel like? Some leaves might feel shiny whilst others are hairy.

How are the leaflets arranged? They might be opposite one another or alternating

What is the petiole like? This is the leaf stalk that attaches it to the stem

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Repeat the challenge, but this time draw a flower. Think about its shape, colour, size etc. just like the leaf

How many petals does the flower have? This can give you a clue to which family the plant belongs to

What colour are the petals?

What is the overall shape? Some flowers can be bell-shaped, tubular, flat etc.

How many sepals are there? These are the (usually green) bits underneath the petals

Can you see the stamens or stigma?

Is this definitely just a single flower? Look very carefully, some flowers are actually made up of hundreds of other tiny flowers packed together, for example daisies or thistles

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For help using these features and your drawings to identify plant species and groups, have a look at the useful links here: http://www.record-lrc.co.uk/c2.aspx?Mod=Article&ArticleID=MyPatch_Links