

Turn over a new leaf!

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Do you remember when we made plant cells out of gelatin a few months ago? Those cells are located in plant leaves and that is where photosynthesis takes place. Photosynthesis is the process the plant uses to make it's own food out of sunlight. This month, we're going to take a closer look at leaves!

The next time someone in your home goes to the grocery store, ask to go with. Spend some time in the produce department looking at all the different leaves that are there. Some leaves you'll see are leafy vegetables like lettuce, cabbage and spinach. Other leaves you'll see are attached to vegetables, but are not the part we usually eat. Celery, carrots and radishes have that kind of leaf. Ask if you can buy some of those leafy and leafed vegetables to try at home. Before you eat them, though, save some leaves to study.

Look over your leaves, front and back. Are there any differences? Feel both sides of the leaf. Are they fuzzy, smooth or slippery? Compare the different examples you have. Are the leaves from different plants the same size, shape or color? Smell the leaves. Are they different? Can you tell which vegetable they came from by their scent? Can you feel the veins that run through the leaves? The veins are part of a plant's vascular system; they are how water and nutrients are transported. To see the veins more clearly, make some leaf rubbings.

You'll need plain white paper and a crayon with the wrapper removed. Put one or two leaves on your table and put a sheet of paper on top. Using the side of the crayon, gently rub the surface of the paper. Soon, you'll see the outline and veins of your leaves. Rub a little harder with the crayon if the leaf outline is too light. You should be able to easily see the different parts of the leaf. Turn the leaves over and make another rubbing, sometimes the veins are more pronounced on the back.

When the weather warms up a little more, there will be lots of leaves on plants and trees outside that you can make rubbings of. You can even take some paper and crayons outside and make rubbings of tree bark or rocks. Always remember to be gentle when you're collecting leaves and leave bark on the tree when you make a rubbing!

The idea of working outside reminds me that this is the last Kid's Corner until next fall. Have a wonderful spring and summer and try to always notice nature using all of your senses whenever you can.