

# RAMSEY READER



## THIS WEEK'S ACTIVITIES:

Create flower art

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Go on a wildflower walk

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Dine on some dandelions

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## *Wildflowers*

Minnesota is home to some amazing wildflowers. Take a walk through your neighborhood and through the parks and you'll notice that they have started to bloom. Wildflowers provide color and beauty for us to admire, but they also serve a greater purpose by providing nectar for insects and seeds for birds. Take part in activities that will hopefully inspire you to get out and look for some of our wonderful wildflowers!

# Flower power

Flowers come in a wide variety of beautiful colors. While they're pretty, the colors are designed to attract pollinators such as birds, bees and butterflies. When insects and animals find a flower, they gather the flower's pollen and nectar for food and then move on to the next colorful flower to repeat the process. Pollen sticks to their feet and bodies as they move from plant to plant, spreading some of this pollen to other flowers and causing pollination and reproduction to occur.

Flower pounding is a fun way to create unique art using natural dyes from flowers and leaves. It's also a great way to relieve some stress. Grab some flowers and a hammer and put the "petal" to the metal with this activity. What is left behind is an original artwork that could be made into a bookmark or a card!

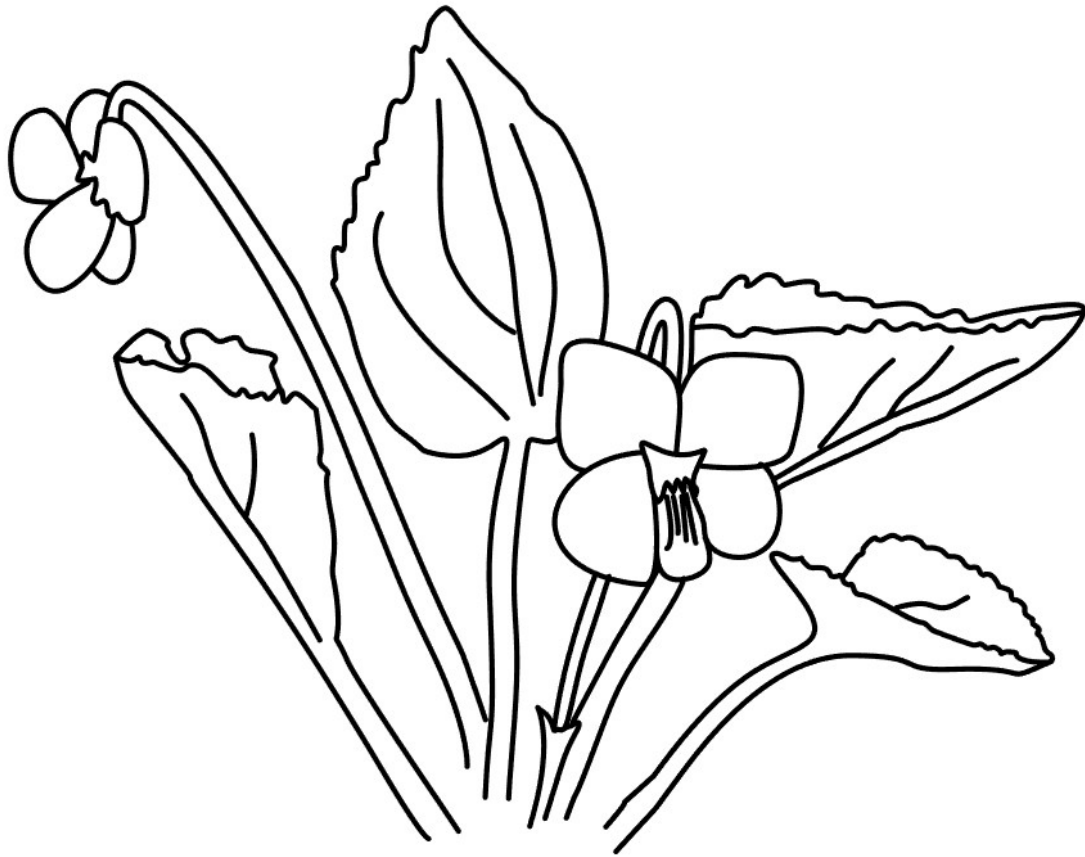


## CREATE FLOWER ART

Start by going outside and gathering some flowers. Try to find ones that have bright colors, even dandelions can work! Remember, only pick a few and leave some for the bees.

Grab some construction paper or white fabric, a rubber mallet and some paper towels. Lay your paper on a hard surface (such as concrete or a sturdy board) and put the flowers face down the paper or fabric. Experiment and move them around until you like the layout. Place a paper towel over the flowers and gently pound them with the hammer so the

flower's colors transfer to the paper. When you're done pounding, carefully take off the paper towel to see your work of art. Find the full activity at [www.instructables.com/id/Flower-Pounding/](http://www.instructables.com/id/Flower-Pounding/)



## Violet

### *Walk on the wild side*

#### → GO ON A WILDFLOWER WALK

Many Ramsey County parks have undergone prairie restoration projects and those are great places to find wildflowers. Prairie restoration sites include Battle Creek Regional Park, Keller Regional Park and Long Lake Regional Park.

For restoration locations within Long Lake, check out this map to help plan your visit: [tiny.cc/longprairiericecreekmap](http://tiny.cc/longprairiericecreekmap)

If you aren't sure what wildflowers to look for during a park visit, one helpful resource is the "What's In Bloom" page on the Minnesota Wildflowers website. This handy guide has names of wildflowers that are currently blooming as well as links to plant photos and species information: [www.minnesotawildflowers.info/page/whats-blooming](http://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/page/whats-blooming)

# Food for thought

Dandelions are a nutritious food that may be right outside your door, dandelion leaves may even be available at your local grocery store! They are a great source of vitamins A and C, as well as calcium and potassium. Before harvesting dandelions from outside, make sure they haven't been sprayed with any chemicals and wash them thoroughly before you eat them. Additionally, this is an activity that children should do with an adult.

## → MAKE DANDELION FRITTERS

The bright yellow flowers of dandelions can be made into a yummy fritter. Use your favorite pancake batter and follow these directions to add a little wild flavor to your day. You can experiment with different flavors, such as cinnamon or cocoa powder, by mixing them into the batter. See the full recipe at [www.ediblewildfood.com/dandelion-fritters.aspx](http://www.ediblewildfood.com/dandelion-fritters.aspx)

- Harvest the tops of dandelions when they are fully open on a sunny day.
- Make your favorite pancake batter or try 1 egg, 1 cup flour, 1 cup milk.
- Heat some oil in a pan, enough to cover the bottom of the pan.
- Grab the dandelions by the greens at the base of the flower and dip them into the pancake batter.
- Once they are coated in batter, drop them into the hot oil, flip them over and fry until they are a golden brown.
- Take them out and place on a paper towel to soak up some of the oil.
- Serve with maple syrup, jam or powdered sugar.



# Learn more

There's so much more to learn about wildflowers. Check out these select resources to continue exploring and discovering.

## University of Minnesota Extension

Learn all about Minnesota's wildflowers and native plants.  
[extension.umn.edu/find-plants/native-plants](http://extension.umn.edu/find-plants/native-plants)

## Mother Earth News

Learn the benefits of growing wildflowers.  
[tiny.cc/benefitsofwildflowers](http://tiny.cc/benefitsofwildflowers)

## The Prairie Homestead

Interested in more dandelion recipes? Here are 16 ways to eat dandelions. (Remember, only eat dandelions you know have not been sprayed with chemicals.)  
[theprairiehomestead.com/2014/04/dandelion-recipes.html](http://theprairiehomestead.com/2014/04/dandelion-recipes.html)

### *Did you know?*

Native wildflowers have adapted to local conditions, need little care once they are established and provide important food that pollinating insects need. Here are some native Minnesota plants that you could try growing in your yard or in a container on a deck or porch.

Milkweeds – important food for monarch caterpillars and nectar for other pollinators.

Meadow blazingstar – favorite plant for adult monarch butterflies.

Black-eyed Susan – bright yellow and a good pollen source.

Purple coneflowers – colorful and drought-tolerant.