

To make the most of any scientific investigation or inquiry:

- Don't be afraid to share the wonder of discovery along with children. Together watch how an insect moves or notice how a plant's color appears to change with varying light conditions.
- Plan opportunities to practice investigative skills in advance. Children will be able to make more meaning of their experiences if they have practiced doing things like sitting quietly, using magnifiers, listening for sounds, or making a record of what they see and hear.
- Model investigation and discovery as an ongoing practice by giving children opportunities to say what they think, time to process what they have learned and to pose more questions to explore. As often as possible, have them record their observations, thoughts and questions in their Nature Notebooks. Keeping records is an important part of scientific inquiry.
- To encourage further investigation, use open ended questions such as, "What do you think lives in this tree?" or "What might have made these holes in the ground?"
- Encourage questions from children and build on their responses. Be prepared to extend the inquiry for multiple investigations. A single *Growing Up WILD* activity could lead to multiple investigations over several hours, days, or weeks depending on the children's interest.
- Don't expect to have all the answers. It is not important to name every plant and animal seen outdoors. Instead, use children's questions as a guide to inquiry. Look for answers together, remembering that the process of asking and discovering is often more important than a specific answer.
- If appropriate, guide your children through the steps of the scientific method: 1) ask a question (what you want to know); 2) create a hypothesis (what you think will happen); 3) develop experimental design (how will you see if your hypothesis is correct); 4) make and record observations; 5) analyze data (your observations); and 6) draw a conclusion based on your results. You may find the need to ask further questions and continue inquiry.

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