



Backyard Scavenger Hunt

Look out your window. What do you see? Whether it's a city skyline or a grassy lawn, nature is closer than you think. Take a walk around your yard or neighborhood to discover signs of spring where you live. Snap some pictures of your findings now and visit the same spots again in a few weeks to see how fast seasons change.

Color the plants and animals around the border of this page if you'd like!

1. Maryland's climate features four distinct seasons and the changes we see from winter to spring are some of the most beautiful and distinct. Find a tree in your neighborhood and take a picture of **new spring growth, like buds or new branches**.
2. While you're peeping branches, look for another sign of spring, the **American robin**. These migratory song birds are famous for their reddish-orange chest plumage. They return to Maryland from warmer southern climates in spring to nest and lay eggs.
3. Shift your focus from the sky to the ground. Robins eat invertebrates like grubs, caterpillars and earthworms. Find an **invertebrate or an insect that slithers or scurries** through the dirt and grass.
4. If you found an earthworm, perhaps you found a puddle. **Puddles can be a tiny universe for some bugs like mayflies** whose speedy lifecycles allow them to lay eggs in even small amounts of water. Their teeny eggs are hard to spot without a microscope, so take a picture of the most beautiful thing in the puddle... your reflection!
5. While scoping out the ground, notice how some plants, like mighty trees or bright daffodils, grow straight up toward the sky, and other plants like, **common ivy and spring beauties, grow in broad, flat clusters**. These plants, known as ground cover, provide shelter for many small animals. **Can you find a plant growing out, not up?**
6. **Eastern cottontails**, the most common wild rabbits in North America, burrow within plant roots or under bushes. With their traditional cotton ball tails and impressive speed, you'll find them darting across grassy areas **at dusk when they are most active**.
7. Speaking of speedy native species, we dare you to go outside *without* seeing an **Eastern gray squirrel**. These foragers known for their love of acorns are common from Canada to Mexico. **They are scatter hoarders**, so they leave stashes of food in various spots to retrieve later.
8. Another sign of spring is a sudden abundance of **dandelions!** We think of them as weeds but their roots and leaves have been **used for centuries as both medicine and food**. Not only are they safe for humans to ingest, they are a favorite spring treat for pollinators like moths, butterflies and some honeybees!
9. Pollinators like **beetles, hummingbirds, moths, bats and bees** are very important to human well-being. These animals spread pollen from one plant to the next as they visit each to feed. This process—pollination—is crucial to the fruits and vegetables we rely on for food. If you can't spot one, invite some over by [growing native flowering plants](#) in your garden or in a pot on your stoop!

