



Seasons Greetings

Background Information:

Seasons Greetings connects our students with nature by examining the signs of the seasons. Students will look for recurring occurrences of each season. This activity can be done at the turn of each season and culminate in a capstone project at the end of the year.

Seasons are the divisions of the year we associate with certain months and weather. Seasons change based on the rotation of the Earth around a tilted axis and its revolutions around the sun. Our seasons also depend on your location on Earth's surface. When the Earth's northern hemisphere is tilted to the sun, it receives more light and heat resulting in longer days and higher temperature, which something we often associate with Summer. While the Northern hemisphere is tilted towards the sun the Southern hemisphere is tilted away resulting in shorter days and cool temperature, something we often associate with fall and winter. So, while we celebrate the coming of summer the northern hemisphere, those in the southern hemisphere are preparing for winter. While we take our trips around the sun, the earth slowly changes its tilt thus we have the change in seasons. Through these seasons our natural world is in constant change. These changes can be observed in the behaviors of animals and people, as well as in plants and weather patterns. Some of these changes are subtle while some catch you by surprise. These changes are exciting to see and truly captivating.

Objectives:

1. Identify the seasons
2. Observe and investigate natural changes of each season
3. Observe changes in plants and animal behaviors

Helpful materials:

- Binoculars
- Colored pencils
- Magnifying lenses
- Glue sticks or contact paper
- Pencil and paper
- Clipboards

Time: 60 minutes minimum. This will depend on how much time you want to give your students to observe signs of the seasons.

Age: Kindergarten through 5th grade

Activity:

1. Get outside! Take your students to a location outside of your building. Encourage them to look for different signs of the seasons. Have them look high, low and at eye level.
2. Observe and Investigate!
 - a. Spring
 - i. Animals – Animals are active and move around often but occasionally we are lucky enough to observe what they are doing and what they look like. In spring we may notice an increase in insects and birds that eat insects.



Have student find several different insects and identify them. Go bird watching and see how many birds you can identify.

- ii. Plants: Encourage students to find and document new plant growth (such as new leaf buds and flower blooms) and sap production in some trees.
- b. Summer –
 - i. Animals: Be on the lookout for predators and prey such as snakes, turtles, raptors, coyotes, foxes, etc.
 - ii. Plants – Encourage students to find and document plant maturation such as continued flower blooms, fruit production, and leaves maturing.
- c. Fall –
 - i. Animals: Challenge your students to find signs of animals preparing for winter such as nest and den building, gathering of food, and storing food. Encourage students to watch what way birds are flying. Towards the end of fall summer birds will migrate south to warmer weather
 - ii. Plants – Encourage students to notice and document fruit ripening and seeding. Have them observe the different shapes, sizes, colors, and scents. Have them document the changing of the colors of leaves and help them learn why this change happens.
- d. Winter -
 - i. Animals: Encourage students to look for wildlife. The absence of wildlife is a sure sign of winter. They may notice certain birds are gone indicating they have migrated.
 - ii. Plants – Have them notice and document the end of the leaves falling, winter berries and the colors of the season. This is a season where many plants do not grow.

Human behavior is another way we can see signs of the seasons. As humans we are everywhere, active in each season and easy to observe. Have students talk about what they do during each season. Encourage them to discuss how we dress, what chores are done outside, or what their grown-ups might do for house/home maintenance. Have them talk about the weather and what holidays/events are celebrated.

3. Share. Have students record what they see, hear, touch, and smell. Encourage them to draw or collect things they have noticed in each season to put together a capstone project.
 4. Reflect. Ask questions such as
 - a. What signs of the season did you notice?
 - b. What is your favorite part of this season and why?
 - c. What is the most enjoyable or challenging part of this season?
 - d. What are common signs of this season?
 - e. What signs do you think we will see next?
- The capstone project is up to the club or activity leader. One suggestion is having students put together a poster or presentation about their experience in finding signs of the seasons.



Reading Connections:

1. Davies, N., & Hearld, M. (2012). *Outside Your Window: A First Book of Nature* (Gift ed.). Candlewick.
2. Locker, T., & Christiansen, C. (2001). *Sky Tree: Seeing Science Through Art* (Illustrated ed.). HarperCollins.

Resources:

Dhruv, S. (2012). *Backyards and Beyond*. Arizona Cooperative Extension, Arizona 4-H Youth Develop in cooperation with National 4-H, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, USA-National Phenology Network and Children and Nature Network.

**This activity is adapted from the Seasons Greetings activity in “Backyards and Beyond” 4-H curriculum. You can purchase this curriculum and the youth activity books from shop4h.org