

Fossils for Kids: An Introduction to Paleontology

By Dan R. Lynch (Adventure Publications) \$12.95

Whether children see their first fossil at a museum or find their own, this easy-to-understand guide in-

cludes details on what to look for and where to look; how fossils are formed; rules about what you can and can't collect; and an identification guide.

Until next month, happy reading.

The staff at the Covered Treasures can be contacted at books@ocn.me.

July Library Events**Summer Adventure continues; some programs resume**

By Harriet Halbig

The Summer Adventure reading and activity program for children up to 18 continues until Aug. 14. Participants receive points for reading, doing a project involving imagination such as drawing or writing, and movement such as taking walks. Each participant receives a prize when they register and a book when they complete 45 points. Nearly 700 children have

registered at the Monument Library.

Although the meeting rooms remain closed for the most part, a few programs have resumed. Due to capacity limits, most programs require registration to attend. To view a calendar of events, please see the district website, ppld.org. Click on programs and then the location.

A few of the programs will be held in local parks.

Masks are now optional for those who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Children over age 11 and those who are not vaccinated are encouraged to wear masks.

We look forward to seeing you at the library!

Harriet Halbig can be reached at harriethalbig@ocn.me.

On the Trail (in memory of Tim Watkins)**Be prepared**

By Steve Pate

In the "On the Trail" column in May, we heard from Keith Lonnquist, an El Paso County Search and Rescue team member, who helps find and give aid to lost or injured people in our local wild areas. Most of us who hike or bike trails hereabouts avoid having to call upon Lonnquist, his search dog Bailey, or others who volunteer their expertise in finding people in difficult terrain.

The Scout motto "Be Prepared" applies to anyone who ventures out hiking or biking in our remote trail systems. Experienced local hikers such as Randy Phillips and others say some basic items should be considered when preparing to hike, including the process of planning the route, anticipating weather and terrain conditions, letting someone know where you're going, etc. Phillips pointed out the "Ten Essentials" that I knew intuitively, but it helps to see them in writing.

Trails familiar to many local hikers and mountain bikers—Mount Herman, Limbaugh Canyon, Raspberry Mountain, Balanced Rock, Chautauqua, and others near the Palmer Lake Reservoirs—are now on hiking apps like AllTrails. Hence, people from outside our area are showing up at trailheads and starting off

without really knowing what's ahead.

Standard items I include in a daypack: water, first aid kit, rope, knife, food, microspikes (October-April), rain gear (April-September), jacket/gloves, small flashlight, waterproof matches, cell phone. InReach GPS or a similar navigation system is also very helpful in finding unfamiliar routes and as a backup in case one becomes incapacitated—Search and Rescue can use the GPS signal to locate you within a few feet.

From *Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills* by the Mountaineers, here are the Ten Essentials:

1. Navigation
2. Headlamp
3. Sun protection
4. First aid
5. Knife

To safely spend a night:

6. Fire
7. Shelter
8. Extra food
9. Extra water
10. Extra clothes

Hokey as it sounds, it's important to consider where you're going and what you need for a safe, enjoyable



Above: From Ice Cave Creek trail looking east.
Photo by Steve Pate.

experience on the trail.

Happy trails.

Steve Pate can be contacted at stevepate@ocn.me

High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)**Touch-free soil aeration, thistle sandwiches, and drunken compost**

By Janet Sellers

Even in July, we can start seeds for late summer and fall crops and flowers, turn green lawn cuttings into summer soil, and learn about the value of thistles.

Easy soil aeration, benign disinfectant

Common drugstore (3%) hydrogen peroxide in a 1:20 ratio of the peroxide to water can aerate garden plant roots with immediate results for oxygen-starved soil. Root rot in container gardening needs a 1:10 ratio of the hydrogen peroxide solution. Spraying the solution on tools and containers and in the greenhouse leaves no systemic chemical residues because it breaks down into water!

Thistle sandwiches

Canada thistle is a relative to artichokes. Kevin Timoney, an Alberta, Canada, ecological researcher, recommends we boil, cool, drain, and then puree Canada thistle leaves with water to render the spines, and more importantly, the fibers, edible and use this creamy puree in spreads, dips, sauces and more.

Despite its noxious weed status, thistle plays many ecological roles. Plants for a Future environmentalists report the flowers, leaves, oil, roots, stems, and seeds are all edible. The stem has a fiber that can be made into paper. It only grows in bare soil, breaks up hard soil, mines and shares nutrients and water to upper soil from as far as 20 feet down, and provides nectar to bees, butterflies, and beneficial insects as well as seeds for birds, protects growing trees from browsing animals and provides cover for birds and other animals. Milk thistle silymarin is being investigated as an anti-liver cancer agent and currently is used in treating type 2 diabetes with significant results.

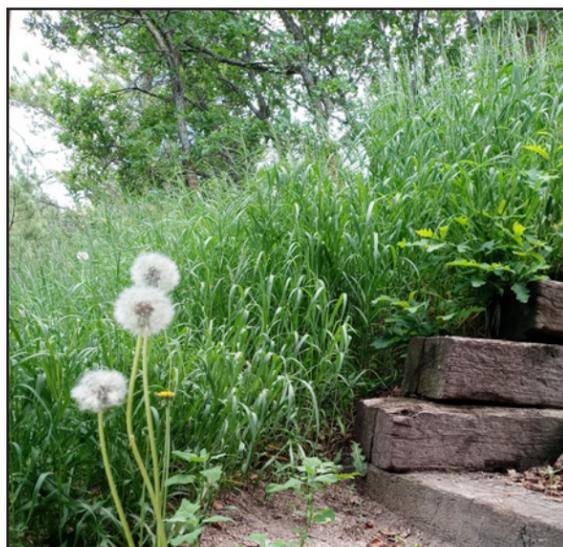
Beer for composting and mosquito repellent

Our recent rains boosted tall weeds in excess of what mulching mowers can handle, and our weed eaters left us grass piles. We can transform that into soil in about a week by using the green, fresh clippings—they'll even heat up and cook off seeds and patho-

gens. Grab two beers and two sodas: one beer (for yeasts), one sugary soda (for sugars), and 8 ounces of household ammonia. Put that in a 20-gallon hose end sprayer (it can pump out 20 gallons of this water tonic).

On the ground (think: worms and biology), repeatedly layer 4 inches of green weeds with a sprinkling of chopped kitchen scraps, fallen leaves, shredded paper, and a tad of soil, spraying each layer. The drunken compost tonic supercharges the microbiological growth. Cover the pile with a tarp (protects the pile and the worms doing their job) or something for seven days, then till with a pitchfork and the pile should be soil—it may take up to 10 days. The extra beer and soda? Those are for your benefit. It turns out that mosquitoes hate beer and alcohol; just put a glass of beer in a room and mosquitos stay away. Maybe drink and refill as needed?!

Janet Sellers is an avid ethno ecologist, enjoying lazy gardening methods that provide optimal results. Send your garden tips to her at janetsellers@ocn.me



Above: Although they look dangerous, lady beetle larvae are quite harmless to humans. After feeding on insect prey for several weeks, the larva pupates on a leaf. Adults tend to move on once pests get scarce, while the larvae remain and search for more prey. Photo by Tara Lloyd.

Left: Cutting tall green weeds is necessary, but gardeners can turn a pile of chopped up green grasses into soil with the application of a beer compost tonic. Photo by Janet Sellers.