A hand-drawn map of Richford Playground. The map is enclosed in a black outline. A blue line representing the Mississippi River flows along the left and top edges. The text 'Missisquoi River' is written vertically in blue along the left edge. Another blue line, labeled 'Missisquoi River Overflow' in blue, runs diagonally across the right side. The playground area is filled with black outlines of various shapes, including circles and rectangles, representing trees and structures. The title 'Locals' Nature Guide to the Richford Playground' is written in green, with 'Locals' and 'Nature Guide' in a smaller font and 'Richford Playground' in a larger, bold font.

Locals'
Nature Guide
to the
Richford
Playground

Missisquoi River

Missisquoi River Overflow

Summer
2017

by the campers of Richford NOTCH Day Camp
with help from Jeannie Bartlett at the
Franklin Co. Conservation District

+ Safety +

Safety isn't something to think about only in nature. There are risks in everything we do. But here are some ways to help keep yourself safe outside.

Carry a first aid kit. Band-aids, sterile gauze pads, medical tape, anti-itch cream, nitrile gloves, and tweezers are a good place to start. If anyone relies on prescribed allergy medications such as an epi-pen, bring it. Know how to use what you bring.

Look out for plants that can give you a rash. Nettles (p.) stings as soon as you touch it, but usually stops within an hour. Poison ivy (p.) and poison parsnip (p.) will give you a seriously itchy rash or painful burn. The rash won't show up until a day or two after you touched it, but it can last for weeks. If you think you've touched one of them, wash the area thoroughly with cold water and strong dish soap.

Don't eat something unless you have triple checked that you know what it is and it is safe to eat. Good resources for checking your identification are in-person experts, published field guides, and online resources like GoBotany, Wikipedia, and iNaturalist.

Check your whole body for ticks every day from early spring through late fall, especially after playing outside. Have someone help you check hard-to-see places like your back.

Wear appropriate shoes and be thoughtful about where you go barefoot. Glass, metal, pokey sticks and sharp rocks can be hiding under water or leaves.

Bring a long-sleeved layer. It can help keep off bugs, the sun, and scratchy plants.

Bring water.

It is easy to trip and fall, hard, if you run down hills. Running up hills is less risky.

Throwing or skipping rocks is fun, but do it away from people!

If you're moving or carrying a stick, think about where both ends are so you don't hit someone.

If you're climbing on a tree or shaking its trunk, look up first to see if there are weak branches that might break under your weight or loose sticks that might fall on you.

Go together! Stay within sight of an adult.

"If you keep walking and don't stand still in the water, leeches won't get you." -Natasha

Respecting Nature

"The only way you can pick up animals is if you're nice to them." -Anthony

"Crayfish want to stay with their family in the water. That's why they might pinch you if you bother them." -TJ

"Ticks are really beautiful animals even if they do hurt people." -Madison

"I thought that crayfish was dead and I said, 'Please don't be dead.' I don't like dead nature." -Kaden

What else might you want to think about so you can keep exploring nature?

The Locals' Nature Guide to the Richford Playground

This nature guide was created by and for the kids and their families who would like to explore the Richford Playground or other natural areas around their homes.

We made the guide by asking campers at the Richford NOTCH Summer Day Camp to go find "cool stuff" in nature around the Playground and tell us what makes that thing so cool. Adults helped with enthusiasm for every discovery and by asking questions like, "How would you describe it to a friend when we go back to camp?" or, "If you wanted to learn more about this on the internet, what would you type in to Google to look it up?"

There is so much awesome nature that we found that didn't make it into this edition of the guide. We just could not record everything. So write and draw your own observations right into this book or in your own notebook! We would love to see what you find and maybe include it in a later edition of this guide. Email your drawings and notes to franklincountynrcd@gmail.com.

The nature walks at Day Camp and the creation of this guide were made possible by many partners. A River Community Grant from the Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers Wild and Scenic Grants Program made this financially possible. Many thanks to Lianne Trombley, Kerrie Ross, and all the excellent staff and partners at the Richford NOTCH Summer Day Camp for welcoming me to their camp and making time for nature walks in their already fun-filled days. And thanks finally to the campers for their sharp observations, their knowledge, and their curiosity.

Happy exploring, Jeannie



Upper Missisquoi
and Trout Rivers
Wild & Scenic
Committee



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Franklin County
Natural Resources
Conservation District



Richford Health Center

"Jewelweed" "Touch-Me-Not" "Poppers"

"New England Aloe"

"Clearstem"

"Red Root"

"I call this plant Clearstem." -Natasha

Impatiens capensis

A fun, common and useful plant that goes by many names.



"You can tell it because it has a clear stem." -Kaden

"It's easy to identify by the orange flower." -Carly

"Poppers" or "Touch-me-Not" because the ripe seed pods spring apart when you squeeze them lightly.



"The roots are red! Let's call it Red-Root!" -Karston

"You rub it on your bug bites and it won't itch anymore." -Kaden

"I have like 20,000 bug bites so I took four of these things. Good thing I have this pouch in my overalls to carry them." -Hannah

"If you get a bug bite you go and twist it up and wipe all the wet stuff on you." -Brooklynn

"Yeah, this is slimy." -Karston

"It worked!" -Mackenzie

We could call it New England Aloe, because the slime is soothing like aloe and it grows in New England.

"This one is as tall as me! It's huge!" -Karston

It grows commonly along the edges of streams and woods, often in thick stands 3-5 feet tall.



Plants and Bugs



"At the end it's all black and pokey." - Logan

We found horsetails

in the woods.

"They're green and black and when you get here there's a little white." - Logan

American Basswood

Tree with big, heart-shaped leaves.



"The flowers and fruit dangle off of a narrow leaf-thing." - Harley



Flowers
Fruit!

"The little fruits are about the size of a pea." - Megan

Grasshopper



"When they hop their legs stretch out really strong and big so they can hop really far." - Parker

Common Plantain

"The tall part looks like grass." - Harley

The leaves are very stringy if you break them.



It grows commonly in yards and gravel roads.

"This snail is all orange." - Autumn

"This one is white and brown." - Nikita

"Look! The eyes are popping out!" - Autumn



"These things eat the garden at Day Camp." - Lorelai

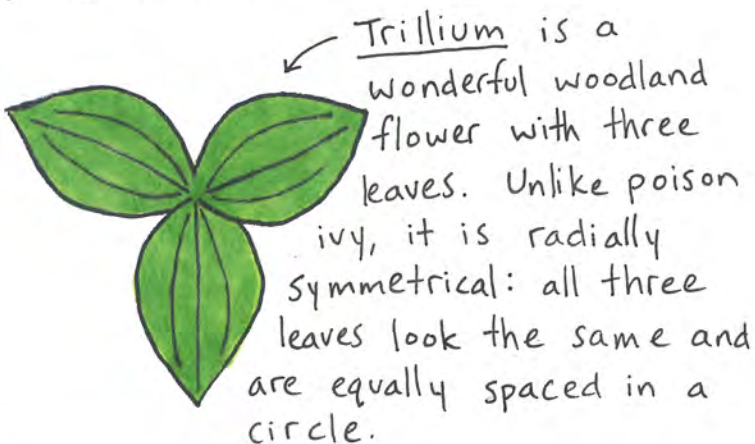
Friendly plants that might look like poison ivy but aren't



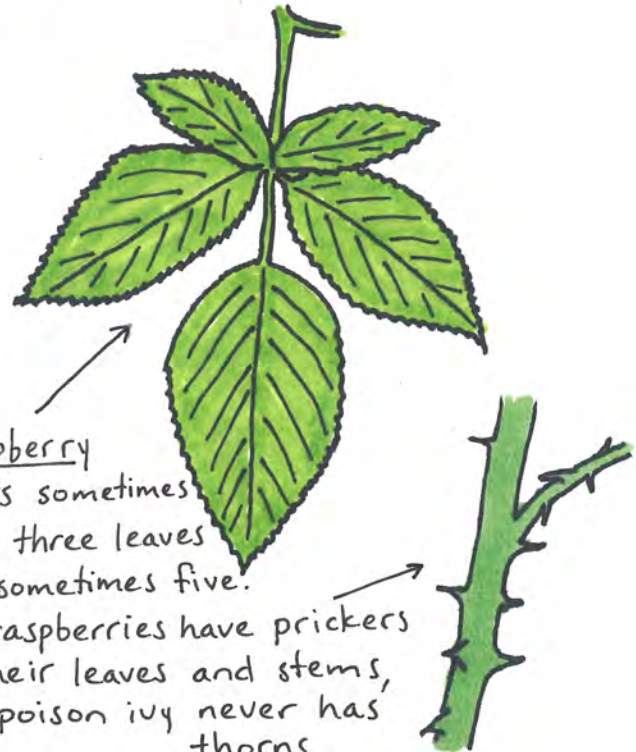
Poison ivy has three leaves, not five like this Virginia creeper. But they like to grow together on the sides of roads.



Strawberry plants have three leaves, but unlike poison ivy they have serrated (bumpy) edges all the way around. It looks like they were cut out with zigzag scissors.

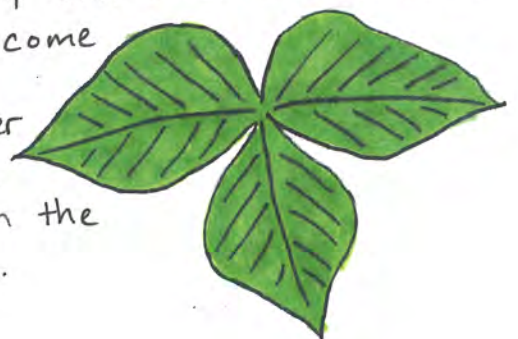


Trillium is a wonderful woodland flower with three leaves. Unlike poison ivy, it is radially symmetrical: all three leaves look the same and are equally spaced in a circle.



Raspberry plants sometimes have three leaves and sometimes five. But raspberries have pricklers on their leaves and stems, and poison ivy never has thorns.

Jack-in-the-pulpit is a special woodland wildflower. You can tell it from poison ivy because the leaf edges are completely smooth, and because the three leaves come right together at the stem in the middle.



Poison Ivy

"Watch out for red stems and three leaves." - Carly

The oils in poison ivy will cause an itchy rash one or two days after you touch it. The rash usually lasts about a week.

Young, new leaves are usually very shiny and reddish.



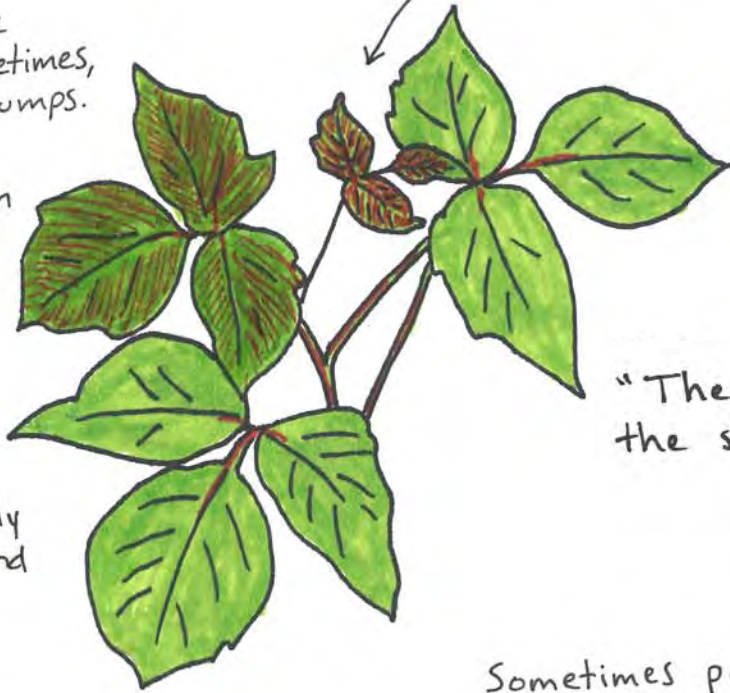
The leaf edges can be more serrated sometimes, with lots of bumps.



Or they can have just a couple jagged edges.



Or they can be almost completely smooth around the edges.



"The bottom of the stem is red."

- Carly

Sometimes poison ivy grows as a vine on trees or fences.



"We saw it before we got into the woods." - Carly

← Poison ivy really likes to grow along roadsides and along the edge of woods and fields.



Parsnip



QAL



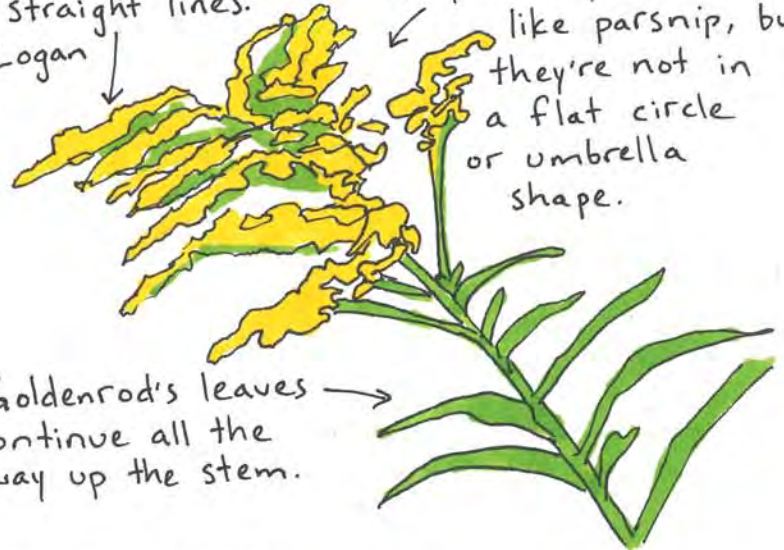
Marshall Mafflick

Friendly plants that might look like poison parsnip but aren't



"Queen Anne's lace has the same shape as poison parsnip, but it is white."
-Marshall

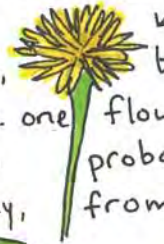
"Goldenrod's flowers go in straight lines."
-Logan



Goldenrod has many tiny little yellow flowers, like parsnip, but they're not in a flat circle or umbrella shape.

Goldenrod's leaves continue all the way up the stem.

Dandelions and cat's-ear are yellow like parsnip, but they just have one flower on one stem. You probably recognize them anyway, from lawns!



"The one yellow flower is a buttercup."
-Natasha



Buttercups are yellow like parsnip, but they have bigger flowers with five nice, flat petals.

They are okay to touch, but poisonous for you or your animals to eat!

Dogwood

flowers grow in a big cluster of tiny flowers, like parsnip, but they are white and they grow on a tree or shrub.



Poison Parsnip

"If you touch it, it will burn your skin off." - Logan

"You shouldn't touch it because it will give you a bad rash that will last a long time." - Natasha

Poison parsnip is actually the same plant you might grow in your garden for vegetables, but it escaped! If its sap gets on your skin it will react with sunlight to give you a nasty burn. It might not show up for a day or more, but it can last for weeks.



"It looks like Queen Anne's lace but yellow." - Marshall

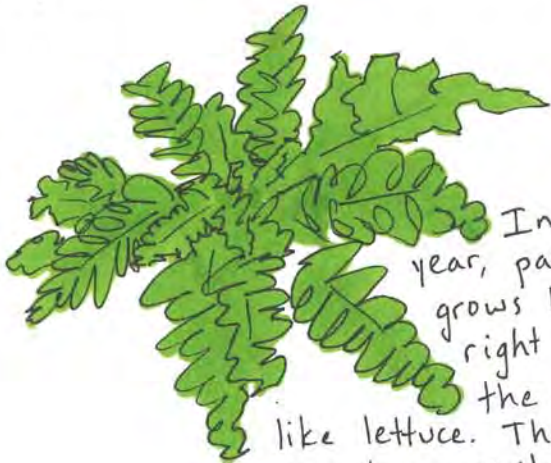
Poison parsnip is most obvious in July, when it has flowers. It's good to learn to recognize the leaves in spring and the brown seed-heads in late summer, too!

Poison parsnip has almost no leaves up on the stem near the flowers.

The fancy name for this burn is:

phytophotodermatitis

"FIE-toe" "FOE-toe" "DER-ma-TIE-tis"
 ↓ ↓ ↓
 plant light skin reaction



In its first year, parsnip just grows leaves right out of the ground, like lettuce. The second year it grows its tall stalk and flowers.



The leaves are pretty big, with lots of little sections.

Poison parsnip likes growing in fields, highway medians, pastures and roadsides. We didn't find any at the Richford Playground. Hooray!

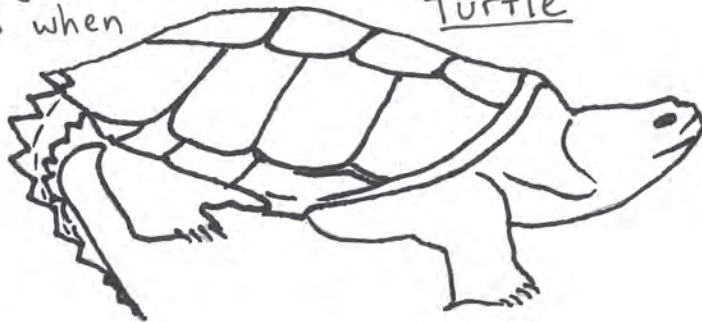
"It grows a lot along bike trails." - Marshall



Bigger Animals ^{and their} Tracks

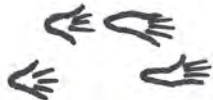
"Why do snapping turtles have long tails when most other turtles have short tails?"
-Khloe

Snapping Turtle



Raccoon Tracks

"On the way to the river I saw these prints in the puddles." -Brooklynn



"They look like our hands but a little smaller."
-Nikita

Deer Tracks



"I know it's deer tracks because my dad shot one and we brought it home and looked at it."
-Brooklynn

Dog Tracks



Coyote Tracks



Muskrat tracks and house
← house



"We found muskrat tracks and its house and even its food!"
-Khloe

Crayfish

"It can grab stuff with its claws." - Ryan
"It pinched me really hard." - Logan

"Some crayfish have one claw that is bigger than the other." - Logan & Kaden

"Its shell is really hard." - Ava

"It has a longer tail than a beetle." - Carly

"It kind of looks like a rattlesnake at the end of its tail." - Sabrina

"He has purple eyes." - Isaac

"They have popped-out eyes." - Sabrina

"It has two little claws right next to its mouth." - Nicole

"It has eight legs and little leg-things under its tail." - Nicole

"Someone caught a crayfish and its shell was all squishy." - Isaac
"I think it had just shedded its shell." - Jeffrey

"They have long whiskers." - Ava & Carly
(Scientists call these whiskers antennae.)

"Crayfish swim backwards and they can be very, very fast. The tail acts kind of like a scoop." - Isaac



"Crayfish often like to live under logs." - Ethan

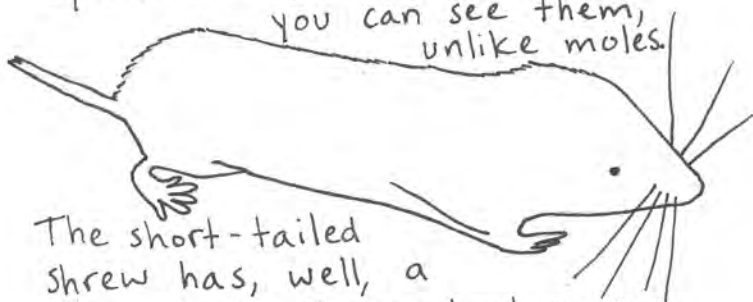
"It uses its tail to go backwards." - Katelyn

"You can scare them out from under rocks with a stick, gently." - Natasha

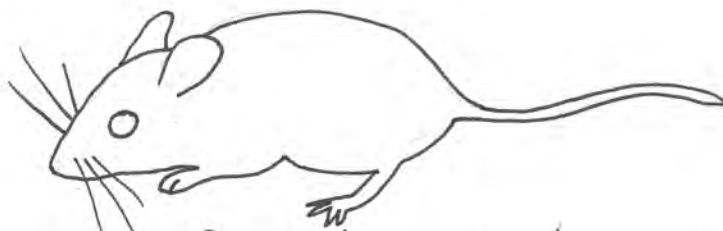
"I think this one is a Virile Crayfish because the claw is blue and has lots of white bumps on it." - Logan

Forest Animals ^{and their} Signs

Hayley found a dead short-tailed shrew. Shrews' ears are tiny and hidden under their fur. Their eyes are very small, but usually you can see them, unlike moles.



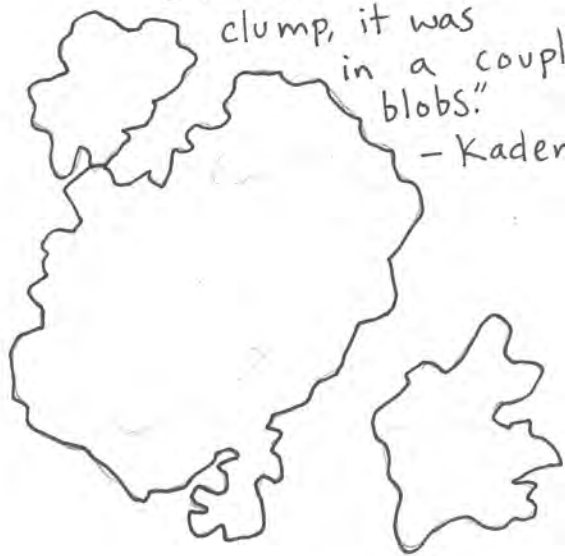
The short-tailed shrew has, well, a short tail! Shrews hunt among the leaves on the forest floor for insects and worms to eat.



We found drowned deer mice a couple of times. You can tell they're mice, not moles, voles, or shrews, because they have big eyes and big ears. Like Mikey Mouse! Deer mice live in lots of places—fields, forests, and houses if they can! Mice love to eat seeds and other parts of plants.

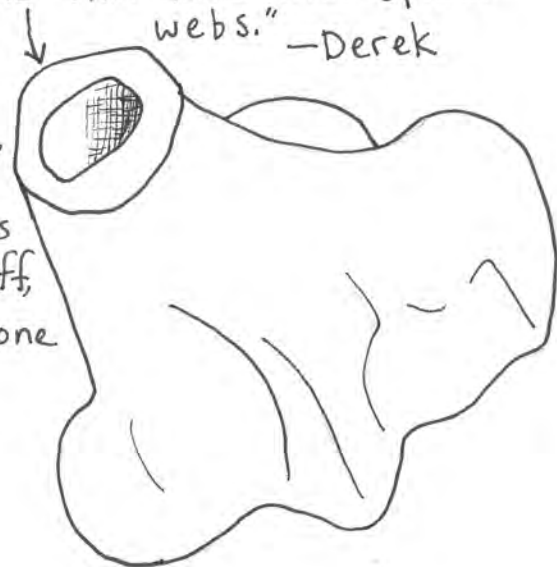
"We found bear poop and it was stinky. It had raspberry seeds in it.

It wasn't in one clump, it was in a couple blobs."
—Kaden



"This bone looks like it was carved out in the middle. It has all these viney things inside that look like spider webs."
—Derek

Because we can see it was smoothly cut off, this piece of bone was probably purchased as a dog toy.



Stream Life

Minnow



"You can basically see right through its stomach."

-Anthony

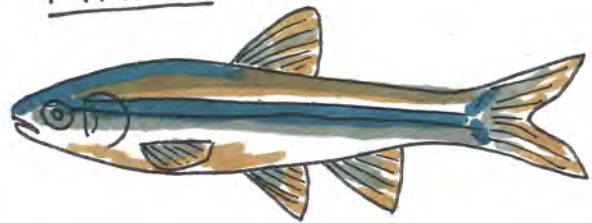
"It likes to swim really fast."

-Vanessa

"If you stay still the minnows will nibble your legs." -Kaden

"They live in groups. They're really shiny and they're really fast, especially in water." -Logan

Minnow



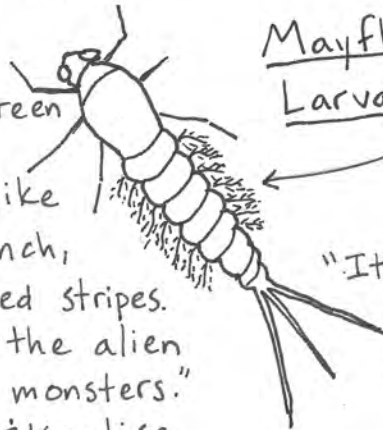
Diving Beetle



"Beetles fly and this looks like a beetle, but it swims! It keeps bumping at the edges. It's swimming all over the place. It's black and its legs are on the bottom."

"They have little pinchers. It's making the water move!" -Erin
I wonder if they bite?" -Logan

Mayfly Larva



"It has green eyes. Its tail looks like a tree branch, and it has red stripes. It looks like the alien on aliens vs. monsters." -Madison & Kaylise

"It has these wavy things on it." -Lauren

"It has three long string-things for its tail and it likes to move." -Lauren

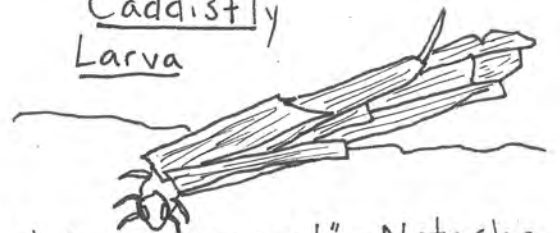
"If you keep walking, leeches won't get you as much." -Natasha



Leech

"It has stripes and it can get really long and then really fat." -Logan

Caddisfly Larva



"Here the water is slower and warmer so the leeches like it." -Khloe

"That stick is moving!" -Natasha
"It's coming out! It looks like a spider because its legs are sticking out like a spider." -Mackenzie

Nettles

"It was high, about as high as my neck."

-Carly

"Don't touch it because it's poisonous. It makes you itch."

-Brooklyn

"If you touch it you get very itchy after a few seconds. But it went away after a little bit."

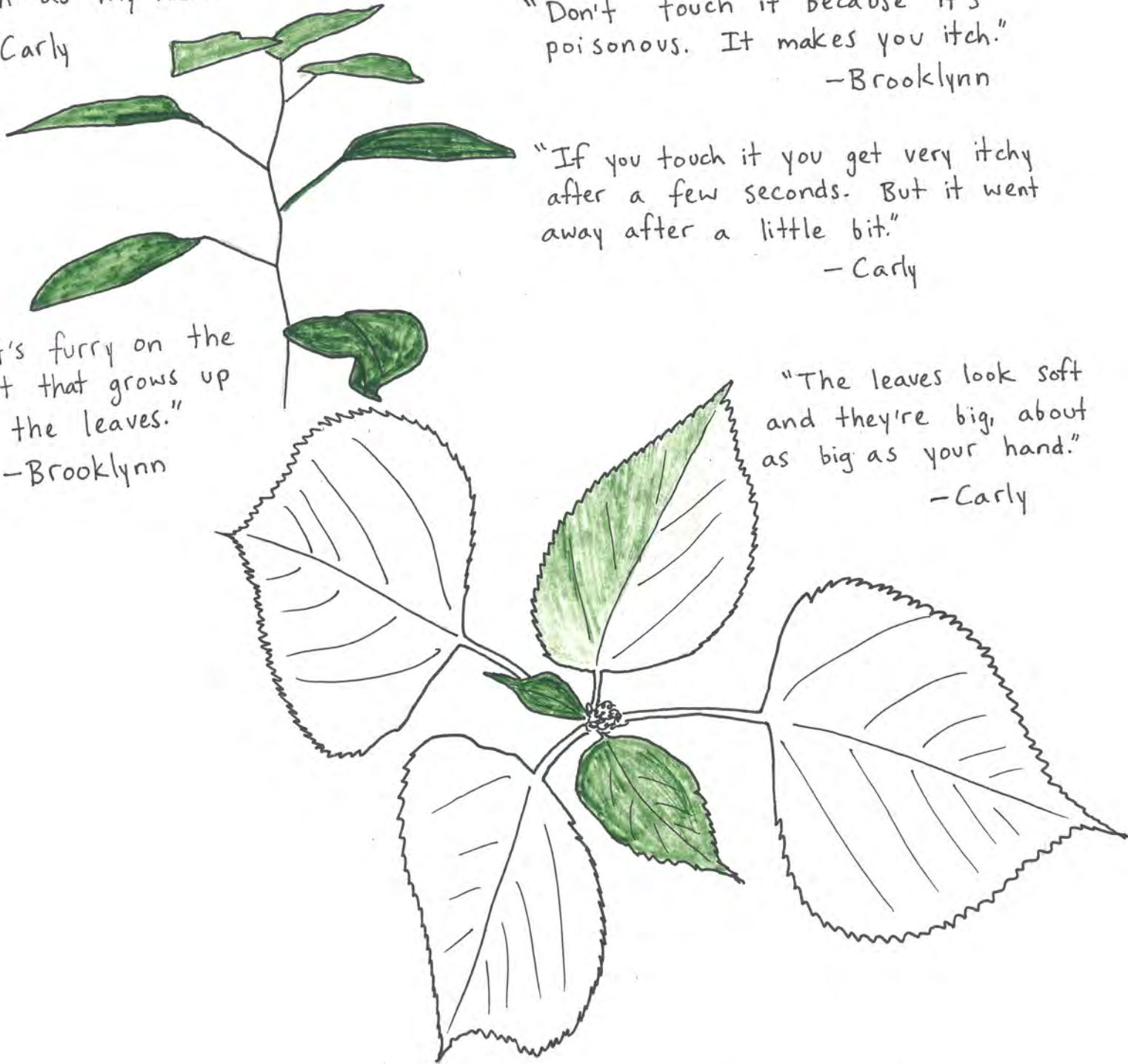
-Carly

"It's furry on the part that grows up to the leaves."

-Brooklyn

"The leaves look soft and they're big, about as big as your hand."

-Carly



"It was growing by the stick-fort thing down by the river."

-Carly

Burdock

"When you pull the pokey things off your dog they are seeds and that's how it spreads."
-Katelyn

"They're that thing that sticks to your dog. They stick to your shirt. They can stick in your hair. When you put one there and another one there they just stick together."
-Mariah

The whole plant is the burdock. The pokey things are called "burrs."



"Dude, the purple ones are flowers."

"The burrs on burdocks are really sharp and if you put it to something soft it will stick to it. See? It stuck to my pants."
-Leighland

"Sometimes they don't look like they have flowers but they do inside."
-Kaden

"Now we can't play with burdock because they chopped it all down."
-Katelyn & Ava

Up close:
"There are points that are rounded up and it's sticky."
-Ava

"Burdock (burrs) are like art because you can make all kinds of things out of it. I hope I have burdock at my house."
-Katelyn



"It does kind of get in your skin, but it doesn't hurt when you pull it out."
-Madison

Burdock plants have big leaves that mostly grow out of the ground. They look like rhubarb.



Burrs turn brown in the winter. (13)

Savannah

Jeannine

K G M S

U Marian

PRESTON

PAZY

Michelle Cdr + Eric

FIJIAN

Erin Ohmer

PAVLE

KONOR

MIKKIFR TJ

OH

Logan

Natascha

VANESSA

Makenzie

KOYR

REPT

Elizabeth

Ava

KATELYN

KAYLIE

Michelle R I D N

WISSON

MADISON

Brooklyn

ONISTIA

Jasmine

ISAAC

ANTHONY