





### Skunk Cabbage Leaves and Soggy Habitat



So, if you take a walk near a stream or river during the spring, keep your eye open for the purple hoods and dark green leaves poking up out of the mud. They might not smell so nice, but they are a mighty help to lot of wild creatures.

### Guiding Questions and Enrichment

1. Ephemerals can be described as “fleeting” because they only have a short time to display their beauty before the trees develop their leaves. Explain how tree leaves negatively impact ephemerals.

*Answer: Leaves will shade the ground. Ephemerals will get less sunlight.*

2. Can you list five or more synonyms for the term, “fleeting”?

*Answer: fading, momentary, short-lived, temporary, brief*

3. Think of other elements found in nature that are not long-standing. How do these compare and contrast to spring ephemerals? You can show your ideas on a Venn Diagram. [Download and print a Venn diagram here.](#)

*Answers will vary. Learners may think of other flowers, stages of metamorphosis, phases of the moon, changing weather, etc. There are many creative answers. As an extension, they may have to write an explanation.*

4. Cite ways that a habitat may be enriched by the presence of skunk cabbage. Consider how other organisms use it for survival.

*Answers: Smaller animals including birds may use the leaves as shelter from rain or even spring snow.*

### **Bonus and Enrichment**

1. Can you find the skunk cabbage's spathe and spadix pictured above? Illustrate the skunk cabbage's spathe and spadix and label each part. Using simple household materials, can you construct a model? Draw your design and include the materials you used.

### **Additional Resources**

- [Native Plant Society of New Jersey: images of Skunk Cabbage flowers and leaves](#)
- [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center: skunk cabbage](#)
- [USDA Plants Database](#)
- [National Wildlife Federation](#)

### **Sample Next Generation Science Standards:**

*\*Please note that the following Standards serve only as examples. Depending on your curriculum, multi-disciplinary standards may also apply.*

- 3-LS4-3: Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity Construct and argument with evidence that in a particular habitat some organisms can survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all.
- 3-5 ETS1-1: Engineering Design Define a simple design problem reflecting a need or a want that include specific criteria for success and constraints on materials, time, or cost.

*If you would like more information about how you might modify this lesson for your learners, contact Kate Reilly, Manager of Education at [kreilly@dukefarms.org](mailto:kreilly@dukefarms.org). Special thanks Environmental Educator, Mrs. Bird, for creating the Forgotten Flowers series.*