

Berrien Springs Partnership Syllabus – Spring 2026

CLASS TITLE: GVNCP - Backyard Nature Zoom

GRADE OR AGE LEVELS: ages 5 to 18

FORMAT: online

START DATE: January 22, 2026 **END DATE:** March 12, 2026

WEEKS TOTAL: 8 weeks **DAY/TIME:** 12:30 to 2:30 PM (2 hours per day)

DAY OF WEEK: Thursday, the class is 8 Thursdays in a row

HOURS (REQUIRED): 16 hours total (16 total lessons)

LOCATION/ADDRESS: DIRECTIONS TO LOCATION :

At your home on Zoom software

MAIN INSTRUCTOR: Zoe Elrick

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION:

Phone: 269-612-8172

Email: galienvalley@gmail.com

Website: www.z-hub.org/galienvalleyncp.html

Please email the instructor to let her know that you signed up for her class.

INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS: Zoe Elrick

Zoe Elrick has a background in education, culture, science, art, history, as well as landscape architecture and ecology. In 2011, she started the Galien Valley Nature and Culture Program (GV-NCP), in Three Oaks, Michigan. Also, she is a registered landscape architect in Michigan and has worked for Pizzo and Associates, an ecological restoration firm of prairies, woodlands, and wetlands. Her landscape architecture degree is from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Plus, she has taken nature classes in New Jersey at the Tracker School of nature awareness, wilderness living, and wilderness survival.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: (websites):

www.z-hub.org/galienvalleyncp.html

www.z-hub.org/nature.html

<https://www.facebook.com/GalienValleyNCP/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Nature-Environmental-Advocacy-45111822807/>

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Class is mostly indoors, but there will be two short excursions outdoors per day.

Dress for weather.

This class is both informative and fun! Spend time outdoors. Explore your own backyard. This is a nature class, a drawing class, and a show-n-tell class, about your backyard, in different seasons. On Zoom, talk with classmates about nature in your backyard.

Share natural features of your backyard, including trees, sticks, snow, etc. with the teacher and fellow students on Zoom. The teacher will help you to figure out what is in your backyard, and how to learn more about nature in your backyard and beyond.

Learn about nature through a variety of hands-on nature-exploration skills.

Recommended: during class, at least for the first few days of class, parents to assist students, that are under age 12.

Backyard Nature Zoom Topics include:

Studying your backyard. Nature Journal; 5-Senses; Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall;

Tracking and Awareness; Michigan Native Local Plants and Animals; Phenology;

Maps; Plant Identification; Backyard Nature Stewardship; and more.

COURSE MATERIALS:

Teacher provides web page with sheets for student to print out at home.

(Required) Required to bring to class (provided by student/family):

1. Smart phone, iPad, and or computer (laptop or desktop) with Zoom software. (Most people find the smart phone the most handy to bring and use outdoors.)
2. Printer to print out sheets of nature activities. Every week, print 3 new sheets, before the class period starts on Thursday.
3. Digital camera or smart phone to take outdoor photos. Be able to email about 4 photos to instructor, each week. Photos are not necessarily taken every day of class, but it's good to be prepared.
4. Dress for outdoor weather in your backyard.
5. clipboard
6. 3-ring binder for nature journal
7. hole puncher
8. unlined paper 8.5 x 11" (printer paper)
9. tracing paper 8.5 x 11" (25 sheets)
10. pencils
11. colored pencils
12. crayons

SYLLABUS/OUTLINE: WEEKLY BREAKDOWN OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITY, 2 lessons per week (within 2 hours)

Week 1 – Jan 22 - Intro, and Winter Landscapes

Week 2 – Jan 29 – Winter Plants, and Winter Animals

Week 3 – Feb 5 – Elevations and Plans, and Map Your Yard

Week 4 – Feb 12 –Native Animals, and Exotic Animals

Week 5 – Feb 19 – Nature in the Spring, Spring Flowers

Week 6 – Feb 26 – Nature in the Summer, Bugs and Butterflies

Week 7 – Mar 5 – Nature in the Fall, Trees, and Leaves

Week 8 – Mar 12 - Review, and Organize Nature Journal

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND APPROXIMATE TARGET DATES:

Each day of class, a student will draw / sketch and write in his Nature Journal.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT - what will be used to evaluate student progress and/or end of semester pass/fail status? All classes abide by the following:

1. Student agrees to attend at least 80% of class sessions/lessons offered. Attendance is kept online and tracked by Partnership staff. Failure to meet 80% or be on track to meet 80% may result in program discontinuation.
2. The Partnership Student Assessment or Performance Form is filled out by the teacher and turned into Partnership staff. The link to this form is found on the web page for this class. Failing marks for lack of participation, behavior issues, etc., may result in program discontinuation.

Student Assessment: Students to: 1. Be prepared / bring materials. 2. Listen to teacher.

3. Ask questions, if don't understand. 4. Be on time to class. 5. Do class activities.

6. Do activities to the best of ability of age. 7. Respects classmates. 8. Be open to suggestions. 9. Stay on task of class activities. 10. Brings required materials (see list below).

CLASS POLICIES: ATTENDANCE, BEHAVIOR, WEATHER, ETC.

Attendance: Students need to attend 80% of class hours.

Behavior: Students are expected to be on time, bring required materials (see list below), listen to teacher, follow directions, participate in class activities, and respect classmates.

Weather: Class will be postponed until next week, if there is severe weather.

(Bring) Bring Required Materials:

See above, Course Materials.