

A MINDFULNESS WALK



Use the following prompts to help you slow down and observe nature in your backyard, neighborhood, or even from a window or balcony. Share your experience by posting a photo and tagging us on social media @JAGardens using the hashtags #JenkinsAtHome or #JenkinsArboretum.

Sky

Begin your walk by standing still and looking around you.

Pause to look up at the sky, down at your feet, and around to the plants growing nearby. Notice the noise of neighbors, critters, or cars. Feel the ground underneath your feet, the breeze or sun on your face, and the sound of your own breath.

Reflect on the joy, strength, and delight we find in nature. Make a decision to set aside your thoughts, worries, plans, or regrets and focus on the living world in front of you.

Tree

Continue walking until you find an old, sturdy tree to stand beside.

Pause to look up at the farthest reaches of the branches, and down to the sturdy flare of the tree's base. Think of the storms this tree has weathered, the depth of its roots, the birds and insects who live on and within its branches and leaves.

Reflect on your own strength and growth: What storms have you weathered over the years? What roots have you set in your community? How do you provide shelter and a sense of "home" to those around you?



Bird

Continue walking while keeping your ears and eyes open for a bird.

Pause to listen to the bird singing or watch the bird flit from branch to branch. Notice the movements and motions of the bird. Watch to see if it is eating insects, collecting nesting materials, or perhaps watching you, too.

Reflect on the life we share with other animals. Much of our time these days is focused on the news and our current situation. What are the priorities and concerns of the birds and other creatures? What are the ways they are going about their normal life? Think of the similarities and differences of the lives we live next to other animals.

Leaf

Continue walking until you find a fallen leaf on the ground. Find a spot to sit or stand for a few moments while holding the leaf.

Pause to look at the leaf in your hand. Feel the texture of the edges, look closely at the veins, spin the stem in your fingers. Think of the seasons of change for this leaf: swelling as a leaf bud in late winter, emerging as a bright new leaf in spring, spreading out and soaking the summer sun, changing color in the cool, short days of fall, dropping to the ground in winter. Think of the repeated cycles of the seasons.

Reflect on the seasons and cycles in your own life. When have there been times of dormancy followed by seasons of growth and flourishing? During this spring season, are there areas in your life that you find to be new, fresh, or unfurling?



Soil

Continue walking until you find a place where you can kneel down and scoop up a small amount of soil in your hand.

Pause to look closely at the color of the soil. Hold it near to your face and breathe in the fresh scent of the living earth. Feel the cool, moist soil in your hands. Think of the nourishment provided by the soil and the ways in which this small bit of earth contributes to the health of all plants and animals.

Reflect on the sources of nourishment in your own life. Whether it be family, friends, music, nature, books, a pet, faith, or even solitude - what are the things in your world that provide nourishment? Who or what provides the spiritual and emotional nutrients you need to live a healthy life?

Water

Continue walking until you see water. This could be a stream, creek, pond, puddle, droplet on a leaf, or even the contents of your water bottle.

Pause to look at the water. Listen to its movement and watch its flowing motion. Think of all the places this water has been, and all the place it is going. Notice how the water never looks the same for more than a moment; it is constantly changing shape and color.

Reflect on the movement and motion in your own life. What are the ways you continue to move forward and flow? How can you be present and aware in the middle of change?

After returning home, spend a few minutes writing down or sketching your experiences. Take a moment to thank yourself for the time you spent slowing down and breathing deeply, and take a moment to be thankful for the nourishment and life we receive from the earth.

