WITCHWARD RISING

THE BOTANICAL STUDY

Garden & Seasonal Observation Journal

A LIVING-PLANT OBSERVATION JOURNAL



Herb garden at the U.S. National Library of Medicine.
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The garden keeps the record. We learn to read it.

BOTANICAL FOUNDATIONS / B-04 · B-09 · B-10

KNOW THE PLANT BEFORE YOU USE THE PLANT

Use this resource

Follow one identified cultivated plant or a clearly defined patch. Keep its location, viewing method, and record code consistent. Use the short observation log to learn the routine, then continue with the longer cultivation and seasonal pages. These are suggested observation windows, not course deadlines. A missed visit should remain a missed visit.

Keep ordinary appropriate care. Do not withhold water, overheat a plant, or otherwise create stress to obtain a dramatic result. For propagation, consult species-specific horticultural guidance before acting; the planning page can be completed without taking a cutting.

Print only what you need. The photographic cover is optional; all working pages use white backgrounds. Print at actual size on US Letter paper. Repeat a selected form for a new plant, batch, visit, or source. Color is not needed to use the records.

Your pages

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Begin with a living-plant baseline.

Record what you know about the individual plant and how you will recognize it again. Choose one feature you can observe or measure consistently without causing damage. Note how the measurement is made; a number without its units or method is hard to compare later.

Plant code / name / identification source

Date / site or container code

Light setting / observed exposure / time

Growing medium / container / ordinary care

Visible condition and growth stage at the start

My repeatable observation or measurement

Describe the marked feature, starting and ending points, units, tool, and usual observation time.

Baseline photograph IDs / what remains unknown

READ WITH: B-04 · B-09 · B-10 | REFERENCES: 2, 3, 7

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Seven visits to the same plant.

Observe at a consistent time where practical. Record light, temperature if measured, growing-medium moisture checked in the same way, leaf posture, growth, and care. Describe an unmeasured condition as an observation rather than an exact numerical measurement.

Plant / baseline record

Usual visit time / method

Date / time	Observed condition or measurement	Light, moisture, care, and other changes

One change, two possible explanations, one next check

READ WITH: B-04 | REFERENCES: 3, 4

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Map the conditions around the plant.

Sketch the immediate setting so another observer could understand where the plant is growing. Include shade sources, nearby surfaces, slope if present, and neighboring vegetation. Record animal activity as observed; a visitor’s function is a separate question.

Plant / site / date / time

Weather and recent management, if known

Map the plant, orientation, shade sources, surfaces, and neighboring vegetation.

Observed condition / plant response / possible explanation

Keep these three categories distinguishable.

Differences that complicate comparison with another site

READ WITH: B-09 | REFERENCES: 3, 6, 7

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Not seen is not always absent.

Phenology is the study of the timing of recurring biological events. Follow the same plant or defined patch, and choose a visible stage to record. Write a definition you can use consistently before your first visit.

Plant / patch code

Stage I am recording

My visible criterion for this stage

For example, explain exactly what will count as an open flower on this plant.

Date / time	Present / absent / uncertain / not checked	Photo ID / conditions / note

Last observed absent / first observed present

These visits bracket the change; they do not reveal an exact onset time.

> Record “uncertain” when you checked but could not decide; “not checked” when you did not inspect the stage. These are different from an observed absence.

READ WITH: B-09: phenology record · USA-NPN: Nature’s Notebook Documentation | REFERENCES: 7

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Cultivation log: the first week.

Use one established, identified cultivated plant. Record ordinary care and follow-up rather than changing several factors to produce a result. Use the same method and units as your baseline page. A blank row may be used for a missed visit; mark the gap explicitly.

Plant / baseline record / observation period

Measured feature / units / method

Date / time	Moisture, leaf condition, growth or measurement	Care / conditions / follow-up

Question for the next week / important confounding change

A confounding change is another factor that could help explain the response.

READ WITH: B-10 | REFERENCES: 3, 5, 11

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Cultivation log: the second week.

Continue the same record, retaining changes in weather, location, age, and care. Do not treat every change after an intervention as proof that the intervention caused it. The useful result is a traceable sequence with its limits visible.

Plant / linked first-week record

Observation period / same method or documented change

Date / time	Moisture, leaf condition, growth or measurement	Care / conditions / follow-up

What changed / what stayed similar / what I still cannot infer

READ WITH: B-10 | REFERENCES: 3, 11

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Nothing emerged. Now investigate.

If no seedling appears above the growing medium, record that result precisely. Without inspecting the seed, you may not know whether germination began below the surface. Use the packet and a reliable species-specific source to investigate the conditions.

Seed identity / supplier / lot / packet date

Sowing date / number sown / number emerged

Requirement in packet or source	What I provided / recorded	Match, mismatch, or unknown

> Consider temperature, moisture, light or sowing depth, and any stated dormancy treatment. Preserve the source wording; do not invent a universal seed-starting schedule.

At least two explanations still possible

What I would change or measure next time—and why

> No visible emergence alone does not establish that every seed was nonviable. A disappointing tray can still produce a very useful record.

READ WITH: B-05: germination and dormancy · B-10: cultivation records | REFERENCES: 8

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Plan propagation before taking the cutting.

Choose a familiar identified cultivated plant and consult guidance for that species and propagation method. Record the source, timing, conditions, labeling, and observations you will use to assess establishment. This page is a plan, not a universal rooting recipe.

Plant / source individual / identification

Method / horticultural source / section

Why this material and method fit the plant

Equipment, medium, conditions, and ordinary safety needs

How I will label and follow the new plant

Assign a new individual code linked to its source plant.

Establishment observations / uncertainties / later follow-up

READ WITH: B-10 | REFERENCES: 9, 10

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Read the change before changing the care.

Follow one identified cultivated plant under its ordinary care. Choose a repeatable observation, such as the length of a marked shoot. Record changes in light, water, temperature, and care before deciding what caused a response. Do not create plant stress for this exercise.

Plant / marked feature

How, when, and in what units I will record it

Date / time	Observation or measurement	Conditions / care / changes

Two explanations that could fit the same observation

One additional check that could help separate them

> A before-and-after sequence in one plant is a useful record. Weather, growth stage, and other changes may still prevent a single-cause conclusion.

READ WITH: B-04: seven-day record · B-10: two-week cultivation record | REFERENCES: 3, 4, 11

References & photograph credit

Numbers match the reference notes on working pages. These original Witchward Rising forms draw on the lessons and the sources below. Online records checked November 4, 2026.

[1] Witchward Rising. Botanical Foundations: The complete 17-lesson collection. November 2026 edition. Companion lessons: B-04 · B-09 · B-10.
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https://openstax.org/books/biology-2e/pages/30-1-the-plant-body

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[11] Schünemann HJ, Vist GE, Higgins JPT, Santesso N, Deeks JJ, Glasziou P, Akl EA, Guyatt GH. Chapter 15: Interpreting results and drawing conclusions. In: Cochrane Handbook. Version 6.5. Cochrane; 2024. Sections 15.2-15.3.
https://www.cochrane.org/authors/handbooks-and-manuals/handbook/current/chapter-15

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