

November monthly block

Cheri Stockinger, 2019 Artist in Residence

Teachers often use a story about Freddy Fungus and Alice Algae taking a “lichen” to each other to teach kids about lichens. Lichens are the scaly pale green, blue-green, blue-gray, yellow and/or brown patches that grow on trees, rocks and other surfaces. It was these colors and a workshop led by Abby Glauser, a lichenologist, that formed the inspiration for this month's block.

Fungus and algae live in a mutualistic, symbiotic relationship, meaning they both benefit. Lichens contain chloroplasts and are considered producers since they gather energy from the sun. Lichen are found in all climates including the arid regions of the world. "Navajo" is this month's quilt block pattern; they are a native American tribe from the arid south west region of North America and is used to represent this diversity.

An old wives' tale says, knowing your lichens can help you navigate as some species are commonly found on the north side of objects to avoid direct sunlight and remain moist while others prefer sunny and dry areas. Furthermore, they are considered pioneer species: lichens are the first things to grow after natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, forest fires and landslides. As we look to the future of space travel and colonization, these creatures might come in handy.



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