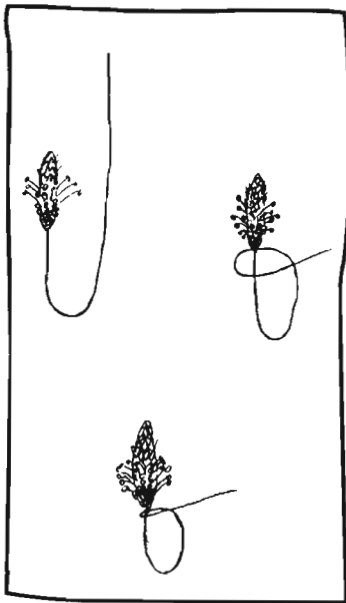


OUR PLACE ON EARTH

NATURE'S TOY STORE

BY JUDY ISACOFF



Summertime and our hills are green again. Right outside the doorstep, wildflowers are growing. There are pink clover, yellow buttercups, white daisies with yellow centers....

I would like to tell you about a little flower you can make into a “shooter” that will fly through the air. It is called a narrow-leaved plantain.

Narrow-leaved plantains are called weeds. Weeds are plants that grow too many; like a bully on the playground, they push out other plants. It’s okay to pick weeds and make toys out of them, but make sure you don’t pick wildflowers — they can’t grow as fast!

The “weed shooter”, or narrow-leaved plantain, is also called

English plantain. Can you guess what country it came from?

Take a look at the picture. Now you can look for this bully and pick it wherever you go. Notice the long, pointed leaves around a tall, thin stem on top of which tiny, white petals float around a green head on top. The flowers look like little space stations on top of a tower.

To make the weed into a shooter, pick a stem down near the ground, so you get the whole stem. Make sure the flower head has some brown on it, that it has begun to go to seed. These shoot best. Bend the stem into a J-shape like in the picture. Turn the end around the back of the flower head, just under it, and make a

loop around it. Hold onto the stem with one hand below the flower and the other at the edge of the loop. Slide the loop down and up around the stem for practice. Then, slide the loop down and press it up hard against the flower head. Off shoots the top!

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