

# WHEELS

## of Time and Place

BY ANNE FORBES

*In today's busy world, you may not receive many invitations to slow down, reflect, and connect to the rhythms of the place you inhabit consciously and without reservation.*

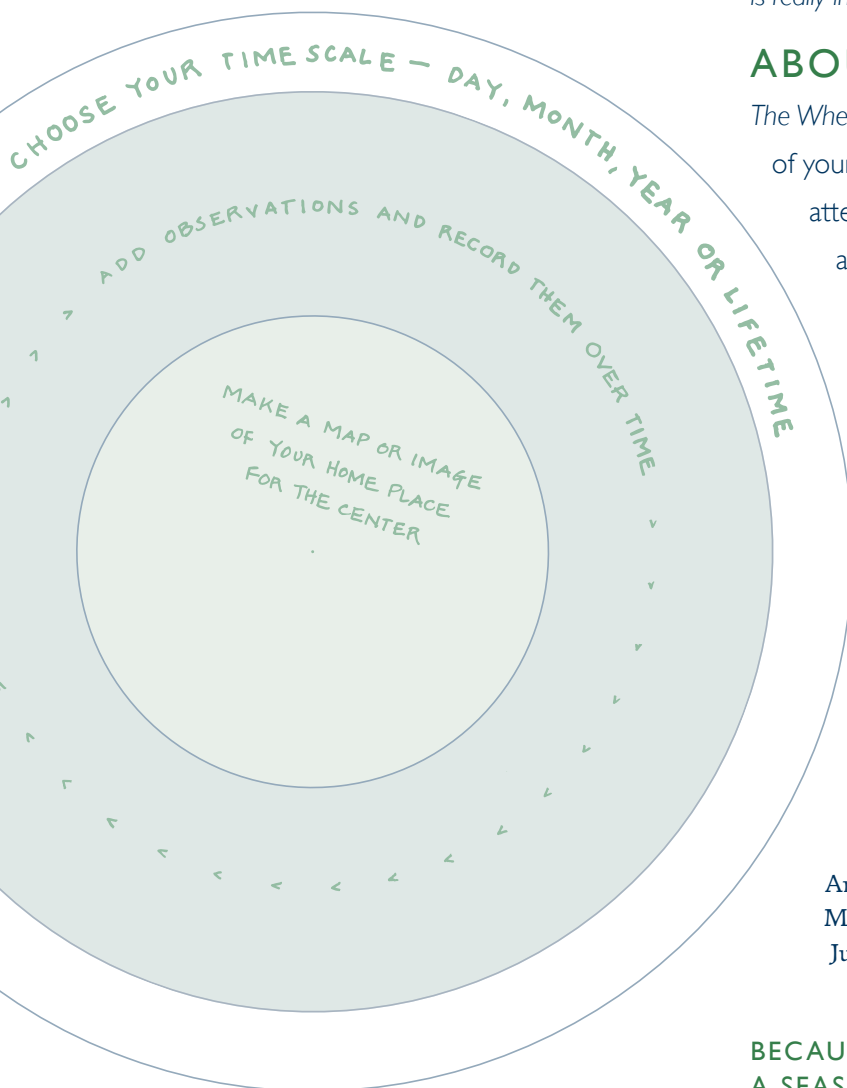
*Please consider yourself invited!*



*Like a wheel on a cart,  
time turns around the hub of your home place;  
the metaphor is a journey taken through  
a day, a month, a year, or a lifetime  
of curiosity and appreciation.*

# AS SIMPLE AS A CIRCLE

**“That’s the beauty of the Wheel.  
It can be anything you need or  
want it to be.”**



**R**ich, purple stains of fall grapes dripping into crystal clear jelly jars in the September kitchen. Arms fanning crisp new snow into angel wings in January. Fresh, fragrant violets and lilies-of-the-valley gathered by the fistful for May Day baskets. Flashing sparklers and flickering lightening bugs set against a starlit sky in July. The seasons seem to flow from one to another in a circle, with each year turning into the next.

We usually think of the passing of time as linear, with one event following another in sequence by day, by month, by year. Placing the same events in a circle helps us discover patterns and use them to communicate about what is really important to us. It helps us to be both grounded and expansive at the same time.

## ABOUT THE WHEELS

The *Wheels of Time and Place* is a set of blank circular journals that you use to explore the glorious details of your home place. In creating your own Wheels using the blank templates provided, you pay routine attention to cycles of day and night, phases of the moon, passing of the seasons, and your own growth and learning.

## AT FIRST GLANCE

Your folder contains twelve different Wheels. Perhaps you’d like to pull them out now and arrange them on a flat surface so you can see them all at once. Check out what you notice about them. There may be one that interests you the most. Starting your own circular journal can be as simple as reaching for the first Wheel that appeals to you. Jump in and give it a try!

## GROWING YOUR PRACTICE

I hope that you keep this folder of Wheels on hand for many years to come. The circle and by extension, the spiral, are universal symbols of wholeness and relationship to the cosmos in human cultures from ancient to contemporary times. Both timeless and original perspectives await you each time you experiment one of the Wheels.

Anne Forbes  
Madison, Wisconsin  
June 2009

**BECAUSE THE WHEEL IS ROUND, YOU MAY BEGIN ANY TIME YOU ARE READY—  
A SEASON, NEW MOON, BIRTHDAY, HOLIDAY, NEW BEGINNING,  
OR ANY OTHER INSPIRED MOMENT.**

# AS YOU BEGIN

*Begin with curiosity.* Perhaps you will answer these questions one at a time over as many days; perhaps you will journal through them all in one sitting. In the process, you may discover what the elements of your next Wheel will be.

**How do you wonder?** Describe a time and place where you recall a sense of wonder so authentic that it catches your breath to remember it now. Take time to draw out the details: when did this happen; where were you; what did it feel like; what did you see, hear, smell, or taste? If you could recreate that sense of wonder in this place and in this moment, what would that be like for you?

**What does the phrase ‘home place’ mean to you?** Is there a specific location, such as a hill, garden, or kitchen that comes to mind? Is there a quality, such as playfulness, discovery, or longing that you feel? Are there words or sounds that call you home? What happens if you search, in your thinking or your wandering, for the place where your heart feels most at home?

**How does your home place move through time?** How do you experience the cycle of seasons in your home place? What are the expected happenings, such as a chorus of frogs, a migration of birds, or celebrations and holidays, which mark the turning of time each year? What types of unpredictable events, such as bats in the attic, a tree taken down by gale winds, or the reappearance of an old friend, catch you by surprise? What about slowing down to ponder your daily life? How do you experience the cycle of each 24 hour day from one sunrise to the next? How do you experience the moon as it waxes and wanes every 29½ days? What lessons do the seasons and cycles teach you about your life, such as when to embrace or resist change; when to be active or quiet; or when to start something new?

**How do you experience the boundaries of your home place?** How big is it? What is its shape? Does it include a house or apartment, a yard or streetscape, a community or landscape? If you dream about a birds’ eye view of your home place, looking down on it from above, does its size seem small or large? If you were to describe a boundary, would it enclose a fixed space? Or, might it telescope in and out, like a zoom lens, offering different sizes of geographic space for different purposes and times?

**When you are ready,** select a Wheel from your folder. You may choose from the following to complement the questions you wish to explore.

WHEEL OF ONE DAY

WHEEL OF LUNAR MONTH

WHEEL OF THE YEAR

SEASONS OF A LIFETIME

BLANK WHEEL



# CREATE THE CENTER



Every Wheel has a center or hub. In the center of each Wheel you make, place a map or image to reflect the place or theme you have selected and to anchor your practice of observation in time and space.

As you think about your home place from its center, allow your perception of its boundaries to telescope out, like an increasing wide-angle view through a camera's zoom lens, to encompass progressively larger geographic areas. Now come back. What is the shape and size of the geographic area you wish to represent in the center of your Wheel?

## Here are some ideas:

**SIT SPOT** a specific, single location where you sit still and let nature come to you

**HOME** kitchen, porch, yard, cottage or garden

**A SPECIAL PLACE OUTSIDE** park, walking path or route, a forest, beach, or mountain

**NEIGHBORHOOD** community, or rural property

**WATERSHED** bioregion, or other geographic area

**ALWAYS AT HOME** an image of the home in your heart or being at home wherever you are

It is wonderful to think of Earth, the solar system, or the universe as your home; however, it is most likely that you will choose a smaller scale for your Wheel.

## WHAT WILL YOU USE TO REPRESENT YOUR HOME PLACE?

**Maps for the Center** If you choose a map, will it be geographically accurate or symbolic?

Will it be traced or cut and pasted from an existing map, or will it be a map of your own creation?

**A Centering Image** If you choose an image other than a map, will you create your own image or use one that you find already in print material? Will you use a photo or a found object, like a leaf or feather?

*In the center...*

DRAWING



MAP



SKETCHED MAP



SYMBOL



PHOTO

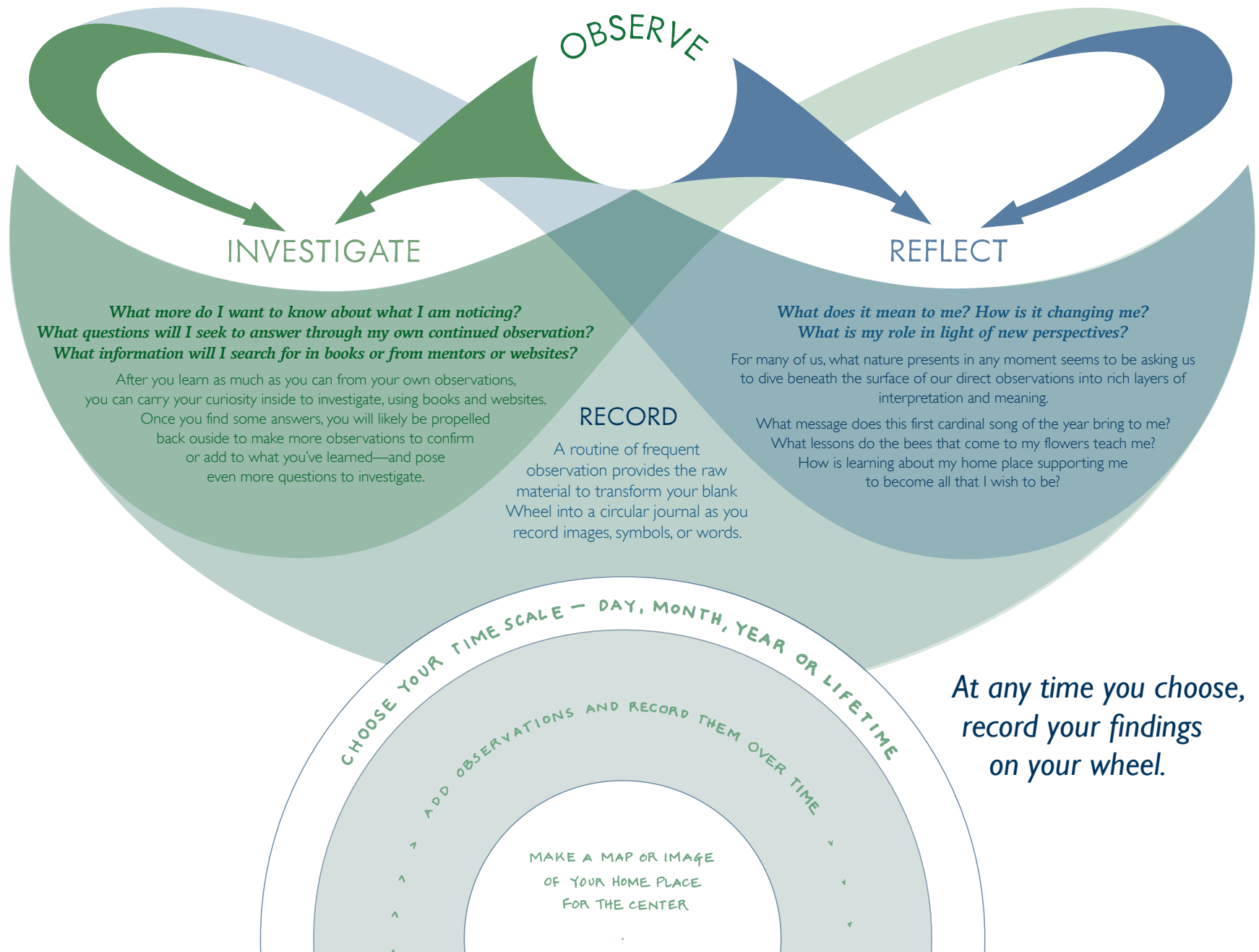


# OBSERVE AND RECORD

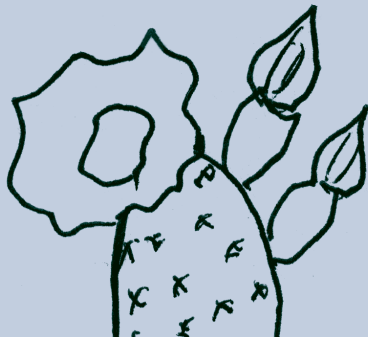
*Whatever landscape you inhabit—urban, suburban, rural, or wild—the practice of using the Wheels helps you use all of your senses to observe the world around you and seek to live more consciously in it—rather than simply on it.*

*What do I notice in this moment? What is extraordinary about seemingly ordinary things? What surprises me as unexpected or dramatic?*

To hone your skills of observation, set the intention to slow down, be alert, and look, listen, feel, smell, touch, and taste what is happening in the moment—a fledgling robin with frantic parents, a lightshow of fireflies, crickets chirping, a dandelion blooming in the crack of a sidewalk, a sudden change in wind direction, a deluge causing flooded gutters and streets. Anything that happens in your home place can be a teacher.



**At any time you choose, record your findings on your wheel.**



## OBSERVE AND RECORD



### INVESTIGATION & REFLECTION IN A HOME GARDEN



Tangles of *Opuntia* cactus sprawl around the dry southwest corner of my rock garden. In early summer, the edges of the fleshy pads produce masses of short-lived succulent yellow flowers. Iridescent green bees, present only at this time, work and buzz at the sticky centers of each flower, collecting loads of pollen to carry away. When I make time to enjoy the habit of observation, I notice that the bees arrive ‘on time’ each year. When they appear, I may simply watch, existing in the moment with the wonder of what is before me. This is often enough.

To mark the occasion, I may record what I notice by adding a sketch or a few words to a *Wheel of the Year*. Often, this is all that is needed to later recall the moment and the reflections it offered. When my curiosity wants more, I will take up a project to learn more about the bees, finding information on the details of their life cycle and place in the web of life through field guides or an internet search. I find out that they are a kind of “green metallic” bee that lives semi-socially in nests of tunnels dug into the ground. I go back outside to observe them again as they fly away from the flowers with loads of pollen attached to their legs, but so far, I have been unable to track them to their nest.

I may continue to reflect and seek to discover the patterns and meanings that fly in with the bees. I wonder about their purpose, and then, about mine: What important tasks in my life take place only once a year? What is it of great importance in the web of my life that I may have left undone? What is it that I have to offer that mimics the specialized role of one kind of bee pollinating one kind of flower? I might meditate on these questions and add more images or words to my *Wheel* or write at more length in a separate written journal.

In less than a week, the last cactus flowers fade. If my habit of observation is keen enough, I may observe and record the last day of bee visits for the year. Maybe I will even notice the last bee! However, it’s never over. I can now watch the flowers turn in to fruits and seeds, and continue my inquiry into what I observe and what it means to me.

Cycles and seasons move our sense of place through time. The map or image you place in the center of your Wheel provides a hub to anchor the basic features or themes that remain relatively constant over time. A routine practice of making and recording observations will begin to transform your Wheel into a circular journal. You may choose to focus on investigation or reflection or a combination of both. Below are examples of investigation and reflection by school children in Cambridge, Wisconsin.

## INVESTIGATION

*As you observe...your curiosity may lead you to investigate the natural or social science behind what you notice.*



*It is wonderful when an elementary school has access to green space!* In this case, third-grade students inventoried all of the trees, shrubs, and flowering plants in their nearby woods. Back in the classroom, some of them summarized the field notes, looked up information about wildlife food habits, and used the Wheel of the Year to illustrate the kinds of food available to wildlife through the seasons. They noticed two times of food scarcity: June, when there were no bushes to bear fruit for birds and mammals (shown in the close-up), and fall, when there were no late-blooming wildflowers to provide nectar for hummingbirds and insects. The students presented their Wheel to the entire school to inspire everyone to help plant serviceberry bushes and fall wildflowers in the woods.



## REFLECTION

*As you observe...you may be drawn to dive beneath the surface to reflect on rich layers of interpretation and meaning that you discover.*

This Wheel of the Year is filled with seasonal poems by 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders about the large school woods, just out the elementary school 'backdoor.' Because the woods is so accessible, the children spend quite a lot of time there developing a deep sense of place, including keen observational skills and a heightened imagination, all enhanced by the affection they have gained by years of exploring, learning and stewardship.







## VARIATIONS ON CYCLES, SIZES, AND THEMES

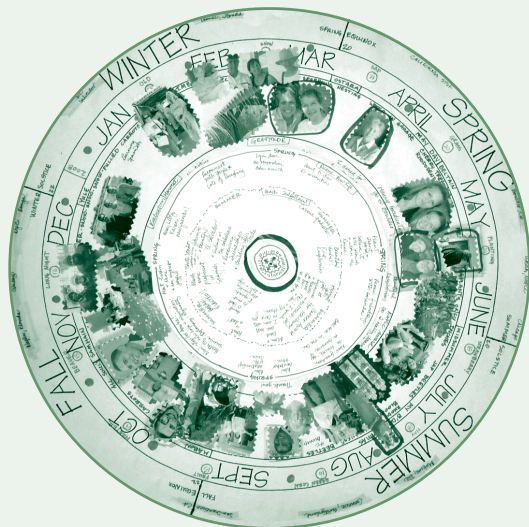
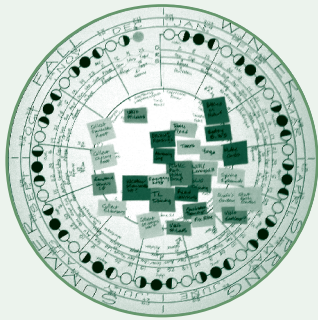
Whether you are embarking on your first Wheel or continuing an ongoing practice of circular journaling you have probably noticed the seemingly endless variations for:

**The cycle of time you choose**—one day, one month, one year with or without moon phases, a lifetime, or a Wheel of your own design based on the blank template.

**The time frame**—past, present or future? Your Wheel may cover the present, so you will record a bit at a time and on a frequent or regular basis. Or, you may choose a retrospective Wheel covering a past cycle or a prospective Wheel with intentions for a coming cycle.

**What size your Wheel will be**—If you are going to start with the 11” size included in this packet, you may wish to make one or more copies “for scratch.” Turn the next page to find out how to make or purchase enlargements of 24” or larger.

**The theme you will track over time**—if you have picked a theme for your Wheel, go for it! If you are feeling uncertain or stuck, perhaps one of the ideas below will capture your imagination:



### TWO VARIATIONS IN SIZE AND THEME

Marian (top) prefers the 11” size and uses it to track projects she would like to accomplish throughout the year, using sticky notes with a different color for each project. “I remove a sticky note when I’ve accomplished a task, so by the end of the year there are only a few left. So instead of filling up, it’s like an emptying out, which is a very satisfying feeling!” Joan (bottom) favors an enlarged wheel that she can post on her refrigerator. “This is a retrospective wheel, constructed after the year was over. I created a photo collage and consulted my date book to fill in many details. This look back flooded me with compassion for the woman I was observing (me!) and with gratitude for all the complex relationships in my life.”

**PHENOLOGY** the timing of natural events, such as when different flowers are in bloom or birds migrate

**ONE KIND OF ANIMAL OR PLANT** eggs ▶ tadpoles ▶ toads in a nearby pond, or seed ▶ seedling ▶ vine ▶ flower ▶ seed for a morning glory

**MANY KINDS OF ANIMALS OR PLANTS** everything that visits or is produced in your vegetable garden

**SKY** shapes of clouds, phases of the moon, stars in the night sky

**HOLIDAYS** celebrations of the seasons and your family’s traditions

**SOUNDS** everything you can hear, as reflective of the activity of people and creatures in and around your home place

**POEMS** write a line or haiku for each month, phase of the moon, or season

**AN ECLECTIC MIX** of nature, social interactions, holidays, weather, etc.

**PROJECT OR ACTION PLANS** track start and completion times for projects in the home or garden

**SPIRITUAL GROWTH** explore new perspectives revealed by cycles and seasons; celebrate healing

**LIFE PASSAGES** characterize the major ‘eras’ of your life so far, or track the ‘firsts’ in the life of a newborn

# ENLARGED WHEELS—KEEPING THE MAGIC GOING

## PRINTING AND ENLARGING WHEELS

When people experience the Wheels enlarged to 24" or larger, their faces often light up, and the Wheels are ready to do their magic, especially when people are working in groups or when they have a place to keep it posted for frequent use. There are two Wheels included in this packet as 24" enlargements; these are the basic Wheel of the Year and the Blank Wheel. There are two ways to obtain more enlargements:

*To make copies of enlarged Wheels...*

1. To make your own enlargements at a copy or blueprint shop (if you care about print quality, ask for a proof or sample to verify the output):
  - Locate the Authorization Key on the inside flap of your *Wheels of Time and Place* folder.
  - Go to [partnersinplace.com/downloads](http://partnersinplace.com/downloads) and enter the Authorization Key, then follow the prompts to download the PDFs.
  - Transfer the files from your computer onto a portable device, such as a CD or memory stick.
  - Take the CD or memory stick to your local print vendor/copy shop (or find out if it is possible to transfer it by email).
  - Notify your vendor that this is a large format PDF to be printed at 24" x 24" (or larger) in black & white on uncoated stock.
2. Take an unused copy of a print Wheel to your vendor to be scanned. Note that the resulting enlargement will be of lower quality than a direct print from an electronic file.

*To make more copies of the 11" Wheels*

Some people prefer the 11" Wheels because they are compact and portable. If you would simply like more copies, there are two ways to do this:

1. They may be directly duplicated at a copy shop on 11"x17" paper, then trimmed to 11"x11" if you would like them to be square.
2. Follow the above instructions to use the **Authorization Key** to have your vendor print 11" copies from electronic files.



This 32" enlarged Wheel celebrates the seasonal progression of plant life in Georgia's new home place.

*"I have always found pleasures in daily, mindful observations of what's happening outdoors as the seasons flow around the circle of the year. This Wheel was made as a conscious effort to "re-home" myself to my new home and new yard by celebrating my observations over the course of a year. It worked!"*



# KEEP IN TOUCH

Be sure to visit [www.partnersinplace.com](http://www.partnersinplace.com) for information on news & events, resources & links, and to contribute to the online gallery of wheels.

*“My hope is that you will begin to enjoy a rhythm of thinking in non-linear time that is life-enhancing and transformative—thus affirming a place of no choice but the one to live in place, in this lifetime, wherever you are in each moment.”*

## Fair Use and Photocopying

**YES:** We encourage you to photocopy, link to, or email the blank templates for the purpose of making your own Wheels and supporting others in making Wheels of their own.

**NO:** Duplicating, linking to, or emailing the Wheels for publication or sale or for use at a professional institute, fee-for-service training, or for-profit event requires our written permission. Please contact us for clarification.



## ABOUT ANNE

Anne Forbes of Partners in Place, LLC has supported environmental and community collaborations as an ecologist and consultant for over 35 years. *The Wheels of Time and Place* has grown out of her work to foster a sense of place in individuals and groups and in response to requests from colleagues and friends who use her Wheels to make them more widely available.

## CREDITS

*All images and photos are used with permission. Special thanks are due to Georgia Gomez-Ibanez, Cambridge Elementary School in Cambridge, WI.*



Printed on recycled paper with soy-based inks

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