

# ELF NOTES

*Environmental Learning for the Future - Vermont Institute of Natural Science*  
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## DESIGNS OF NATURE SNOW AND MORE

### **Measuring Snow**

You can measure the amount of snowfall with a homemade gauge made from the bottom half of a clear plastic soda bottle marked with a permanent marker on the outside. Place one in the open, one near a tree and compare.

The wind blowing over light snow can cause impressive drifts to build up, covering roads and blocking passageways. With a ruler or yardstick, measure some drifts and compare their depth to the depth of surrounding snow. Push a board into some solid snow and see if the wind builds snow up along one side. Can you tell which way the wind is blowing?

In freezing temperatures, water in the air can take a variety of forms from snowflakes to hailstones. The design of frozen precipitation tells about its creation and the weather conditions that shaped it. Snowflakes consist of one or more tiny and intricate snow crystals that have joined together in their descent to earth. An individual snowflake can be categorized according to its particular type of hexagonal (six-sided) crystal shape. Common classifications of snow crystals are: plates, columns, bullets, capped columns, needles, stellar crystals, and spatial dendrites.

Temperature and moisture content of the air in which the crystal grows and through which it falls determine the kind of crystal that will form.

Other types of frozen precipitation, freezing rain, hail and sleet, are formed according to air and ground temperature and wind conditions.

### **ELF NEWS**

