



Short activities

for use in woodlands
at Key Stage 2

Ephemeral sculptures

Give groups 10 or 15 minutes to create a sculpture made of natural woodland materials. Leaves and twigs could be woven into shapes or threaded onto cotton and arranged in patterns. Branches could be arranged flat on the ground or placed vertically. A photographic record should then be made of the structures created and repeated at regular intervals as the structures decay. The work of Andy Goldsworthy and other similar artists could be used as a stimulus for this work.

Grow your own

Collect fallen acorns or other seeds for planting back at school. Acorns begin to fall in late September or early October. Test for those most likely to germinate by placing the acorns in a bowl of water. Healthy acorns, being more dense will sink to the bottom. Soaking the acorns overnight will help them to germinate. The acorns should be planted at a depth of about 3 cm in compost, with stones placed in the bottom of the pot to facilitate drainage. After watering, tie a plastic bag over the pot to minimise water loss. Leave the pot outside over-winter, in a cold but sheltered place, and the seeds should germinate the following spring. As soon as the seedling appears, remove the plastic bag and begin to water the pot once or twice a week. When about five leaves have appeared, transplant the seedling to a larger pot before ultimately planting out, preferably somewhere in your school grounds as a permanent reminder of the link between your school and its local wood.

Micro-trails

These are very short trails, about 2 metres long, marked with short lengths of string. This could be done either by the teacher beforehand or by the children themselves. Pupils should work slowly and carefully along the trail, observing everything on (or under) it in detail using a magnifying glass.

To help with this they could be asked to imagine that they are as small as an ant.

Colour matching

Provide the children with colour samples, which could be small chunks of coloured tile or sections from paint colour charts from a D.I.Y. store. How many of the colours can the children find in a defined area of woodland in a given time?

What Am I?

Prepare a set of small cards showing woodland creatures and their names, one card per child. Fix a card onto each child's back so that they cannot see what it shows. The children should move around within a defined area, asking questions to which the answer can only be 'yes' or 'no', in order to find out which woodland animal they are. This activity could also be used as a means of placing children into pairs, with two copies of each card being produced and children getting into pairs once they know that they have the same animal.

Predator - Prey

Arrange the children into a circle around a safe area of level ground. Blindfold two of the children and designate one of these as the predator and the other as its prey. Working within the circle, the predator should try to catch the prey within a set time limit using only their hearing as a guide. If either child goes to the edge of the circle, the surrounding children should tap them on the shoulder to redirect them. Stress the need for silence from the other children. Once the predator has caught its prey, or failing this, when the set time limit has expired, choose two other children for these roles. The game could be made more complex by increasing the numbers of predators or prey.

Slide Show

For this activity you will require one empty photographic slide case per child. Ask the children to search within a defined area for a leaf, which they should clip inside their slide. Arrange the children in a circle to represent a slide carousel. Each child should hold their slide up to the light and examine it carefully. On a signal, pass the slides one place around the circle to be examined by the next person. Continue until all slides have made a complete revolution of the carousel. Can the children recognise when their own slide comes back to them?