



WORDS FROM THE WOOD

Week 1- 23rd March 2020

Tips and ideas for learning and connecting outdoors during Covid-19...

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Welcome to nature fun!

The purpose of this letter is to help all the people who normally enjoy our Forest School sessions to continue having fun with nature and hopefully getting outdoors into your garden, balcony or on a quiet walk. We will have a focus each week on a particular topic and explore some different ideas and links for activities. This week with all the lovely Spring weather the focus is on using our senses, particularly our sight, for the wonderful things you can experience at this time of year. Next week we will continue with all our other senses.

The benefits of outdoor time

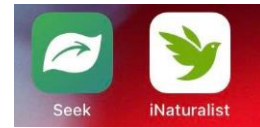
At present we need to ensure we are all getting a bit of time outdoors as it is recognised by health practitioners as being super beneficial to our health & well-being, particularly in such changing times. Being outdoors can:

- Reduce stress (even looking at a nature picture can do this)
- Allows achievement, independence & builds resilience and confidence
- Keep us physically healthy
- Connects us with nature and of course is lots of fun!



play • learn • connect

Getting Started



A great starting point is to download the brilliant nature id app SEEK by i-naturalist. It uses the power of image recognition technology to identify the plants and animals all around you. Earn badges for seeing different types of birds, amphibians, plants, and fungi and participate in monthly observation challenges with Our Planet on Netflix.

- **Get outside** and point the Seek Camera at living things.
- **Identify wildlife and plants** you see and take pictures to earn badges
- **Learn fun facts** about the organisms all around you

This can be done with an adult, or older children will be able to use themselves with permission from an adult. The information found out with this app can then be used for a nature journal- see more on this later. You can see a video of someone using this app at this link from a Forest School Leader posting ideas on Facebook on his page Forest School in the Home and Garden (children should only access Facebook with the supervision of an adult)

<https://www.facebook.com/102909884683145/videos/257044415293575/>

Spring/Scavenger Hunts

In March the weather can be changeable, this week there has been amazing sunshine and everybody is really enjoying getting out. There is also lots happening in nature so this is a great opportunity to have a really good look around using our eyes to observe things. You can find many Signs of Spring spotting sheets and I have included the one we use for younger children, but changed the frogspawn and tadpoles we would normally see up on the Ridgeway site to moss and the beautiful Yellow Brimstone butterfly, a wonderful sign of spring. By the way, last week I did spot the frogspawn in the farm pond, so new life on the way!

Scavenger hunts are another great way to encourage spotting things around us and can be made more a challenging too for older children. Below is an example of one we used recently and this is a good link to help with making up your own or use some free ideas

<https://www.myopencountry.com/nature-savenger-hunt/>

Scavenger Hunt

Find:

1. A leaf just beginning to come out
2. A beautiful smell
3. A yucky smell
4. Over 100 of something
5. Something blue
6. Something beginning with the letter *M*
7. Something soft
8. Your favourite spot to sit-listen for buzzing
9. Tallest plant
10. Smallest plant

Oak Leaf Signs of Spring



Blossom



Insect



Green Leaf



Seedling



Bird



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

Butterfly



Flower Bud



Nest



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Moss



Flower



Pussy Willow

Focusing Observation

Scavenger hunts and spotting sheets can be a great way to get the eye in and encourage some detailed observation of nature, without even needing to know the name of things, you can really appreciate the wonders of nature. Other activities which encourage observation can be;

- Using binoculars, or making your own from toilet roll tubes. Use sticky tape to join two tubes, tie on a piece of wool or string and decorate. Young children find it tricky to look through two tubes, so just use one and make a telescope or monocular
- Make a frame from paper or twigs tied together then place or throw somewhere on the ground and see what is in your frame. If you have a magnifying glass can you make it bigger?
- The children who walk to their Forest School love stopping to take 'Mind' pictures where we pretend to be the camera, frame the picture we want to take with our fingers and then get someone to 'click' the button, which can be your ear or some other spot- sound effects are important!
- If you have a small mirror it can be interesting to take it outside, holding it at the height of your chin pointing up to sky, to give you different view of trees and sky. Then try walking around (a route without obstacles!) to see how the view changes.



Colour matching

There will be lots of colour gradually appearing in your gardens and on walks so colour matching is a great way to learn colours, but can also prompt interesting discussions on the different shades of green with older children, they can also come up with their own interesting names for the colours. Take this chart outside and see how many you can find.

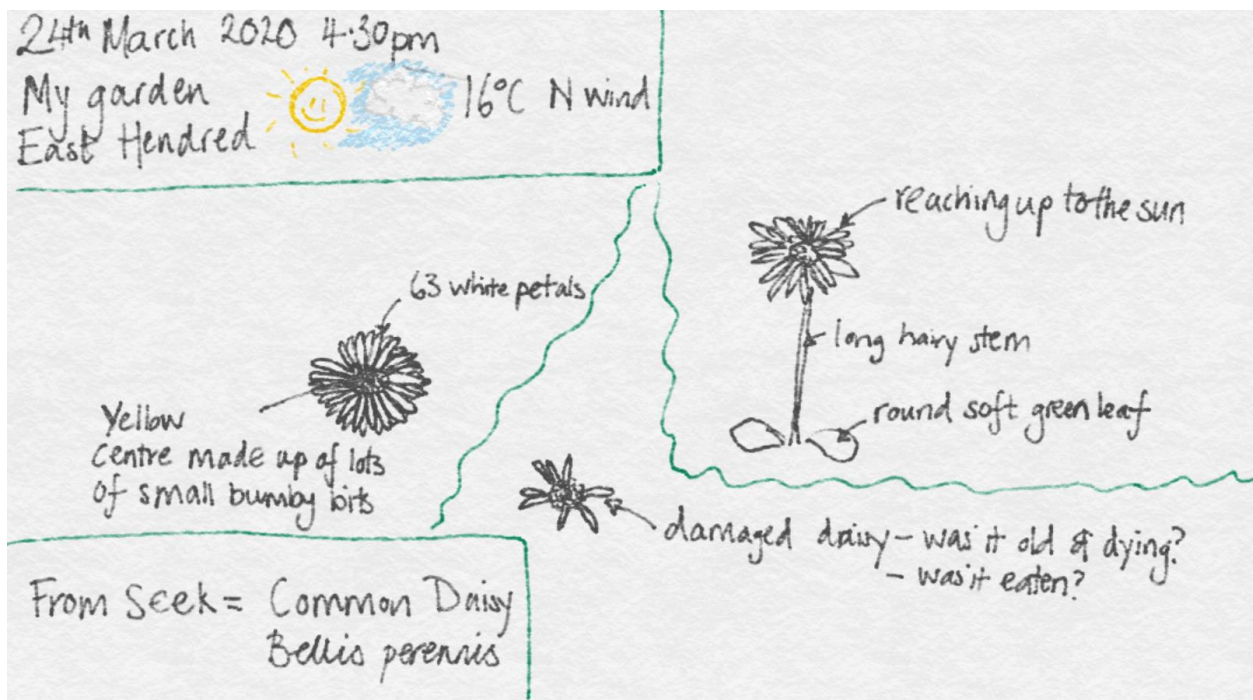


Nature Journals

After all that focused observation and connection with nature it would be amazing if you could then record some of the things you noticed in a nature journal. This could be a shared family project or something to do by yourself. It can be done with scrap paper that you clip together to make a booklet; a spare notebook or there are journaling apps if you want a digital copy. Some important details to note on your page are:

- The date, time, location and any other details such as weather in a corner of page. This can be as a written list or you can use symbols
- Observational drawings of item you are interested in eg tree, leaf, flower, insect, mud. Draw it from different angles or with something else to get the size. This does not need to be a good/pretty drawing, just detailed. If it was something nature had plenty of and it could be stuck in then this is a possibility too
- Labels of the different things you notice on your item. Use numbers (of petals etc), colours, textures and your own thoughts to describe it in different ways. Ponder questions, notice any damage, what is the story behind it?
- Share with someone and connect with your observed piece of nature

If you want to take this further there is a free downloadable book with lots of information available from here https://johnmuirlaws.com/product/how-to-teach-nature-journaling/?attribute_format=Free+PDF+Download



Good luck with your outdoor adventures and look out for some more next week...