



Sensory Nature Hub Box Activities

Sharing our learning

Through working on the Sensory Nature Hub project we have collected some simple ways of engaging with nature in your own environment. We are confident that anyone can find a good sensory way of interacting with nature that is quick, low cost and fun! Have a look at our suggestions below and see which ones work for you!

Sound activities

Sound can often be overlooked when talking about sensory activities or outdoor lessons, however there is a wealth of fun, easy ways you can explore sound. Try going on a sound treasure hunt – can you find something that makes a squeak, a snap, or a crunch? Can you hear birds, cars, wind? We have found that sound maps can be a really great activity for calming and relaxing people in an outdoor environment. Check out our guide to sound maps on our website. www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/creative-activities/sound-maps.htm

Try being quiet and listening to the sounds of your body. Start moving and see what sounds you can make.

Imitate the sounds of nature you can hear, bird song, the wind.



Collecting nature stuff

Collecting is a great way to get outdoors and pay close attention to what you can find in your environment. You can use something as simple as a bucket or even a plastic bag to gather up some items of interest that you can then investigate more closely either in a good spot outdoors or back inside. You can set guidance for what you are collecting such as, the biggest range of textures, small things that will fit in a match box, red things.

Textures

Texture is a wonderful way to explore the natural world. You could gather different textures from around your home or school and see if you can match them with textures outside. Or just head out and see the range of textures you can find, how many are there? Setting yourself textures challenges can be a great way of discovering the variety out there, see if you can find something smooth, bumpy or rough for example.



Shapes and colours

The natural world is made up of different shapes and colours. Go exploring and see what you can find. You could collect a shape, square, triangle or circle, and see if you can find it out in nature. Are there more triangles or circles outside? Can you use shapes in nature to draw around to create your own shapes?

The variety of colours in the natural world is a wondrous thing! Try seeing how many colours you can collect, maybe get some colour strips for buying paint and see if you can match them up to colours you find? How about setting a challenge to find the widest range of greens possible, see if you can find every shade of green there is! What is the most unusual colour in nature? Can you find a very dark purple that is almost black, or the brightest pink or orange? What is your favourite and why?

Smell

How good is your sense of smell? Take a smell journey around the outdoors, sniff everything to see the variety of smells out there, does a twig smell, how about when you tear a leaf, scrape away a bit of bark? How are you at describing smells? The language of smell can be a funny thing, sweet, sour, savoury, bitter, how about relating smells to colours or feelings instead? You could collect smells from the outdoors and sort them into an order from the best to worst or piles of ones you like and don't like.



Weather

There is always weather! Before you venture out take a moment to look outside, or open the door and feel how the day is. Is it hot or cold today? Dry or wet? Depending on the temperature today what will you need to be wearing to go outside? Gloves and a hat? Sun cream?

Go outside and look up. This is a great way to get to know the day but something we often forget to do! What types of clouds are in the sky? How fast are they moving? What colours can you see in the sky – or perhaps the moon and stars?





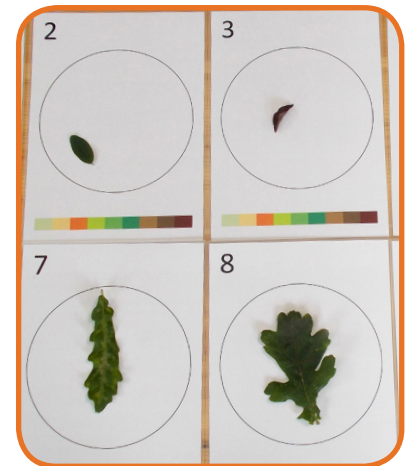
Ways of focusing

Think about how you can focus in on different parts of the outdoors. This can be done through all of your senses, either all at once or separately. We often find using a frame (can be as simple as a piece of card with a cut out, or an actual picture frame with no glass) can be really helpful when focusing in on specific things. Set a challenge of finding something red, spiky, soft and so on, you can then frame it with your frame and show other people, or take a picture.

Why not leave a frame on a stand framing a view that you can leave and see how it changes over time?

Ranking and matching

A good way of noticing the differences of things in nature is to think about sizes, collect a range of leaves, pebbles, or shells and put them in order of size from the biggest to the smallest. Can you find objects that are the same? The same shade of a colour, the same texture, things that smell the same. How about finding a range of objects and putting them in an order from your favourite to your least favourite. Don't forget to talk about what you find and think about what made you notice it, its shape, texture, how it smells, colours.



Active and passive

It is always good to have activities that vary in pace from the very noisy run around type through to a quiet even passive activity. Depending on the space you have available a timed treasure hunt is often a hit. Send people off to find natural things within a certain amount of time and bring them back, of course with lots of shouting and encouragement!

Quieter activities can be useful at the end of a session (or even a warm up) to bring back some focus and calm individuals down. We have found simply doing something practical but repetitive works well for this. Our hoop and loop activity is good for this, creating basic bird feeders using pipe cleaners and cereal hoops, turning them into different shapes and hanging them out onto trees. The activity is one that can be done individually and is a slower pace, it helps to focus in on your own hands and helps to calm people down as you have to concentrate on threading the cereal onto the pipe cleaners.

<http://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/creative-activities/hoop-loop.html>

Exploring temperature

Temperature is often something that gets overlooked but can be a great resource in the outdoors. You can begin by thinking about your own temperature, the temperature outside and how your temperature will change when you go outside. Explore the temperature of things outside, how different materials differ in temperature, if you leave something outside does the temperature change throughout the day? Water is a good way to play with temperature.



Growing

There are a wealth of activities that can be done with growing, find something that interests you and see if there is a way to grow it, or find it growing somewhere. Growing enables you to discover how plants and flowers in particular develop, this can also be related to how we grow and change throughout our lives. Some things can be grown quickly, such as cress or rocket, demonstrating the journey from seed to plant in a matter of days, sprouting seeds are also very good for this kind of up close approach. See if you can collect seeds from trees, like acorns and talk about how the small seed sprouts and becomes a seedling and eventually a huge tree.

Seasonal – ALWAYS something to find

Don't be put off by it not being summer! People can presume that nature has the most to offer in the summer months, but nature has so much to share at all times of the year. The joy of kicking up autumn leaves, breaking icy puddles, the first green leaves of the year, snowdrops, crocuses, daffodils, conkers! All special punctuations of the year that can be used for activities.

Just because it's a cold, drizzly morning it doesn't mean that you can't go out and find things to collect, watch and find. There are nearly always leaves on the ground and when you look closely you might find that the variety of textures and colours surprises you (even in the middle of the winter). Slugs and snails often make an appearance after heavy rain so why not go on a mini beast hunt?



So what are you waiting for? Get outdoors and enjoy what nature has to offer! More activity ideas, hints and tips available on our website. Please feel free to share your favourite ways to stimulate your senses outdoors and connect to nature!

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