

Marvellous May

Bringing Westonbirt Arboretum to you

A self led activity resource for care homes



Please Note: it is critical that people follow the government's guidelines on social distancing to protect each other, to slow the spread of the coronavirus and support our NHS.

May is the traditional month for the Hawthorn (also called May) to put on a show in the hedgerows at Westonbirt Arboretum. You may notice hedges filling up with white blossom near you. This pack contains some activities and ideas to help you enjoy the arboretum from a distance, and connect with trees, forests and nature, including:

1. Images of some of Westonbirt's hawthorn trees.

What memories, emotions or thoughts do these conjure up? Do you have a hawthorn growing in your garden, or near where you live? Did you ever eat the fresh spring leaves, (known as bread and cheese), or collect the Haw's (the autumn berries) and make hawthorn jelly out of them?

2. The Hawthorn, a poem by Victor James Daley

Read the poem and use the images to create an acrostic poem.

3. Hawthorn facts & figures

What local folklore do you know about the hawthorn?

4. A craft activity to make your own May garland.

5. A craft activity to paint a countryside May scene







The Hawthorn

Victor James Daley

By the road, near her father's dwelling
 There growth a hawthorn tree:
Its blossoms are fair and fragrant
 As the love that I cast from me.
 It is all a-bloom this morning
 In the sunny silentness,
And grows by the roadside, radiant
 As a bride in her bridal dress
But ah me! At the sight of its blossoms
 No pleasant memories start:
 I see but the thorns beneath them -
And the thorns they pierce my heart.

Acrostic Poems

An acrostic poem is a poem where the first letters in each line spell out a word or phrase related to the topic.

Robert MacFarlane and Jackie Morris's book *The Lost Words* has lots of examples of nature based acrostic poems.

Ask each person to write a line of poetry for a different letter in the word Hawthorn. Once complete, use the hawthorn blossom painting activity or make some paper hawthorn blossoms to create a frame for the poem and display.

H

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W

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H

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Hawthorn Facts & Figures

Crataegus monogyna (Common Hawthorn)

Common names

May, Maythorn, May-tree

Hawthorn (Haw is derived from the Anglo-Saxon for hedge)

Quickthorn

Whitethorn

A famous specimen in England was the Glastonbury or Holy Thorn which, according to legend, sprouted from the staff of Joseph of Arimathea after he thrust it into the ground while visiting Glastonbury in the 1st century AD. The tree was noteworthy because it flowered twice in a year, once in the late spring which is normal, but also once after the harshness of midwinter had passed. A sprig from this tree is presented to the British Monarch each Christmas.

The Scots saying "Ne'er cast a clout til Mey's oot" conveys a warning not to shed any cloths (clothes) before the summer has fully arrived and the Mayflowers (hawthorn blossoms) are in full bloom.

In Gaelic folklore, hawthorn (in Scottish Gaelic, *sgitheach* and in Irish, *sceach*) 'marks the entrance to the otherworld' and is strongly associated with the fairies.

Serbian folklore notes that hawthorn is essential to kill vampires, and stakes used for their slaying must be made from the wood of the thorn tree

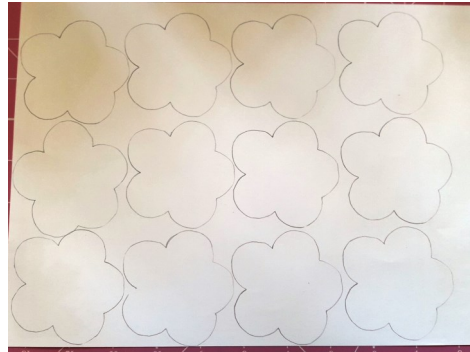
Make a May Flower Garland

You will need— scrap card, white or cream paper, green paper or thin card, yellow pen or crayon, black pen, pencil, scissors, glue, string.



Step 1.

Draw a 5 petal flower onto a piece of card and cut out to make a flower template.



Step 2.

Draw around the flower shape onto white or cream paper to make an even number of flowers.



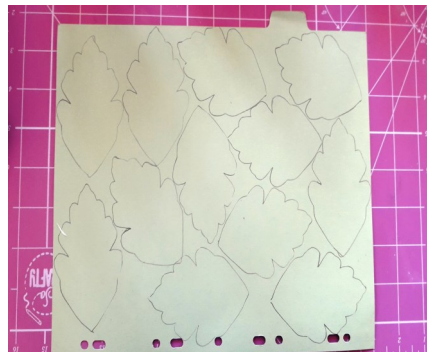
Step 3.

Cut out the flowers.



Step 4.

Draw a hawthorn leaf onto a piece of card and cut out to make a leaf template.



Step 5.

Draw around the leaf shape onto green paper or thin card to make several leaves.



Step 6.

Cut out the leaves.



Step 7.

Glue 2 leaves onto one of the paper flowers.



Step 8.

Place the string across the flower.



Step 9.

Make a yellow circle in the centre of the next flower and add small black dots.



Step 10.

Glue this flower on top of the previous flower.

Step 11. Repeat along the string until you have used all the flowers—try adding some flowers without leaves for variety.

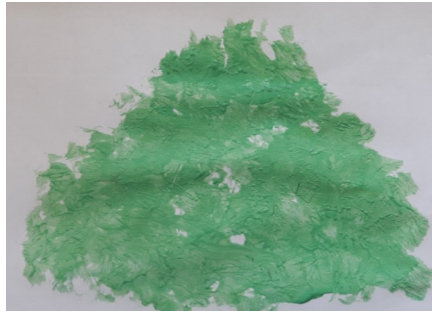
Paint a May Country Scene

You will need— white, coloured paints and pens / pencils, scissors, glue, spare bubble wrap, rubber band, paint brush.



Step 1.

Use the tip of the paint brush to dab green paint onto the paper.



Step 2.

Continue to make a tree shape.



Step 3.

Secure a small piece of bubble wrap around a sturdy item with an elastic band to make a stamper.



Step 4.

Dip the stamper into the white paint .



Step 5.

Use the stamper to make a blossom effect onto the tree shape.



Step 6.

When dry, add a trunk and cut out. Repeat to make another tree.



Step 7.

On a new piece of paper paint a background countryside scene and leave to dry.



Step 8.

Once dry, glue the trees to the background scene and add embellishments if you have them.