Forestry England

Key stage 1 & 2 lesson plan

Natural materials - art

Forestry England looks after more than 1500 woods and forests in England. Forests provide endless learning opportunities, and are great places to inspire creativity. Take your class for a visit to your local forest, and collect materials to make wonderful pieces of natural art.

Curriculum links

Art: (KS1) Using a range of materials creatively; Using sculpture to develop and share ideas and imagination; Using colour, pattern, texture, shape and form in the development of artworks. **(KS2)** Improve mastery of art and design techniques including drawing and sculpture.

Science: (KS1 & KS2) Plants and animals; Everyday materials; Seasonal changes.

Before your visit

Ask the children to draw a picture of what they think the forest will be like. Invite older children to add a sentence about the different kinds of natural materials that they would expect to find in the forest. How would this vary according to the time of year?

To help your class prepare for their forest visit, take a look at our education resource hub and use the pre-visit filter to find some fantastic resources. These include thinking about what to expect from the forest and what your class will need to do to keep themselves safe whilst looking after the forest.

For health and safety advice and some top tips for teaching outdoors, visit **forestryengland.uk/planning-your-visit**

You will need to bring:

- a selection of pictures of animals you would expect to find in a UK woodland
- laminated scavenger hunt cards – prepared in advance (see p. 2)
- collecting bags
- simple tree ID guides / keys
- clipboards
- plain paper and wax crayons

For more learning resources visit **forestryengland.uk/learning**

Starter activity

Find an area in the forest to sit or stand in a circle. Give out the pictures and descriptions of the forest that the children completed at school.

What things are the same?
What is different?
What natural materials did the children include in their original picture of a forest?
Can they see anything extra, or unexpected?

Explain that they are going to explore the forest to discover what materials can be found, and how they can be used to create pieces of natural art and sculpture.

How to collect with respect

- Collect from the forest floor wherever possible
- Spread your load – carefully collect only a few leaves or petals from any particular plant or tree
- Do not disturb wildlife habitats e.g. log piles
- Do not pick berries or fungi as they may be poisonous

Scavenger Hunt

Divide the children into small groups and give each one a laminated scavenger hunt card and a collecting bag. The card should contain a list of at least five items for the children to find.

When they have found everything on their list, the children should return to show everyone their treasures.

Extension

Ask the children to look at all of the things that they have collected. Can they sort them according to their characteristics, for example, shape (regular or irregular), colour, where they've come from (animal or plant), dead/alive or never alive?

Forest scavenger hunt - can you find:

- ☐ something prickly
- ☐ something soft
- ☐ something smooth
- ☐ something shiny
- ☐ something hard
- ☐ something waxy
- ☐ something yellow
- ☐ something round
- ☐ something heart-shaped
- ☐ something bendy



Forest animal Art gallery

Forests are great for wildlife. They provide a range of different habitats (places where animals and birds can make their homes), as well as supplying the food that they need to eat.



Can the children name any woodland animals or birds that they might find in a UK forest?

Show the animal pictures you have brought as a visual reminder if needed. The children are now going to choose one of these animals as inspiration for a piece of artwork.

Ask the children to work in pairs or individually, to collect four (or more) sticks to make a picture frame and then choose a spot where they would like to make their picture. The children should prepare the ground by gently sweeping the leaf litter to one side to clear it. This will form the background to their art work.

The sticks should be laid on the ground to make a square or rectangular frame. Then, using natural materials collected from the forest floor, the children can make a picture of their chosen animal inside the frame.

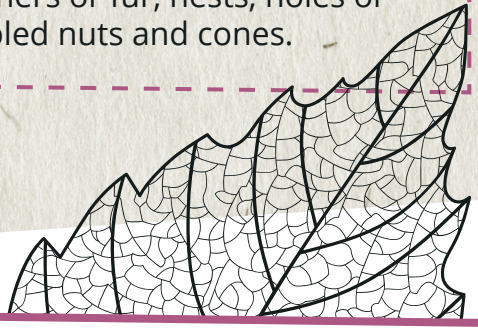
Encourage the children to look carefully at the properties of the different materials that they have collected, and think how they can use them to create an interesting and detailed image.

Older children should try to select materials that capture the characteristics of the animal that they have chosen, for example, which materials would work well to express a fox's bushy tail or a hedgehog's prickly spines? Encourage the children to introduce a sense of energy and movement into their animal picture.

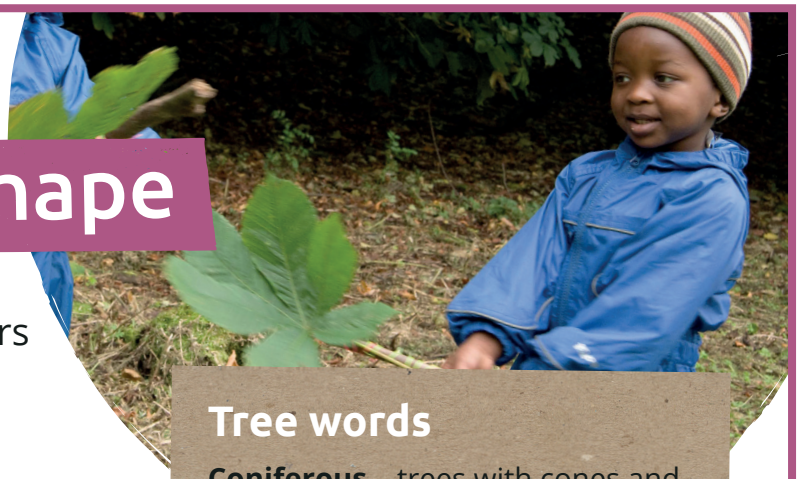
Take photos for a lasting record of the children's works of art.

Extension

Look for evidence of woodland animals such as droppings, feathers or fur, nests, holes or nibbled nuts and cones.



Exploring leaf shape



Find an area where there are conifers and broadleaves (see box). Ask the children to look for three different tree leaf shapes. Count how many different leaf shapes they manage to find altogether.

Do the children know the names of any of them? Have they found any leaves from evergreen trees, such as fir, pine or holly?

Discuss the difference between coniferous, broadleaf, evergreen and deciduous trees.

Use simple reference guides to identify the different leaves.

Tree words

Coniferous – trees with cones and needles e.g. Scots pine, Douglas fir; usually evergreen

Broadleaf – trees with broad flat leaves e.g oak, silver birch; usually deciduous

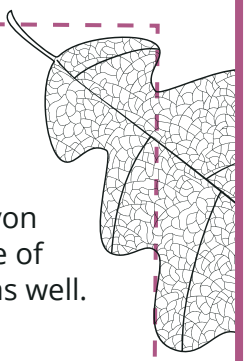
Evergreen – trees which keep their leaves all year round; mostly conifers (but not all e.g. holly is evergreen, but not a conifer)

Deciduous – trees which lose their leaves in autumn; mostly broadleaves (but not all e.g larch is a deciduous conifer)





Extensions



Leaf rubbing – record different leaf shapes by making leaf rubbings. Place leaves with the veins uppermost between a piece of a paper and a clipboard. Hold a wax crayon flat on its side and rub it over the leaf. Cover the whole piece of paper with colourful rubbings. You could try bark rubbings as well. (If wet, take leaves back to school to do the rubbings there).

Leaf Lacing – for this, you will need fresh leaves and small twigs. Overlap two leaves and push a small thin twig through both leaves at one end where they overlap. Then push the twig back through the other side. The twig will now hold the leaves together. Repeat with lots of leaves. Encourage the children to try different ways of arranging the leaves; in size order or varying colours. Point out that the front and back of leaves are different colours. When the children have made a string of leaves, hang them from a tree for others to enjoy.

Importance of trees – although each tree species is different, with its own distinct leaf shape, bark and twigs, all trees are important to us for a variety of reasons. Discuss what trees do for us e.g. helping to reduce climate change by taking in CO_2, releasing oxygen and purifying the air, providing a renewable fuel source and building material, acting as wind breaks and giving us shade.

Celtic Circle



Can the children think of any reasons why people visit forests, e.g. dogwalking, playing, horse or bike riding?

Explain that forests have inspired people all over the world for thousands of years. Some artists use natural materials to make pieces of ephemeral (temporary) art.

Tell the children that you are all going to work together to make a beautiful piece of art, in the style of Andy Goldsworthy, made entirely from things you can collect, and without harming the forest!

Ask the children to stand in a fairly large circle. Clear the area in the centre of the circle of any leaf litter by gently brushing away to the sides with your feet.

Find an attractive tree section or object to place in the circle centre.

Encourage the children to think about all of the natural materials they have found today, focusing on their colour, shape and texture.

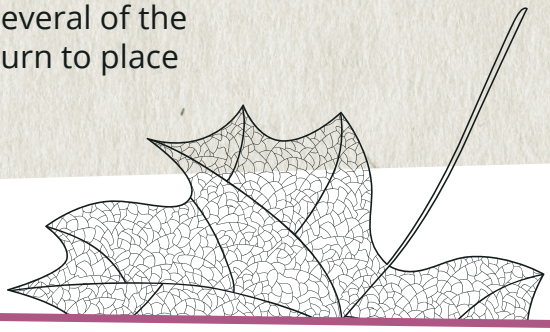
Can they suggest something to make the first concentric ring around the object that you have placed in the circle centre? Send the children to find several of the chosen items and then return to place them down.

Remind the children that they are creating a piece of art and that they should arrange things carefully, making sure that things are placed in the same direction and the right way up.

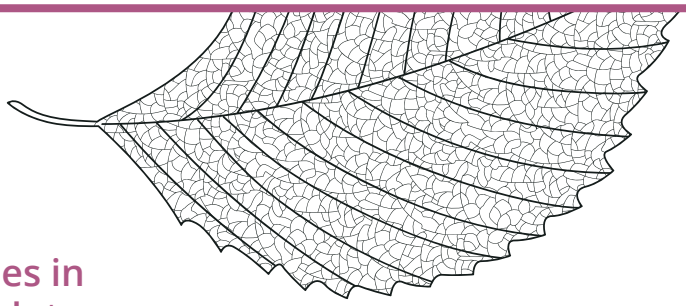
Once they have placed their objects down, they should stand back in the circle ready to discuss the next layer.

Think about using scarce materials for the first few rings and more readily available materials for the larger outer rings.

Build up contrasting rings for maximum effect. After creating about 8 to 9 different rings stand back to admire your work. Take a photo as a permanent record to display back at school!



Back at school



Research how artists use forests and trees in their artwork. There are a number of sculpture trails in Forestry England woods that you could investigate further, e.g. Grizedale in Cumbria and the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire.

As well as sculpture trails, Forestry England provides many other facilities to help people to enjoy their visit to the forest.

In order to encourage people to visit and enjoy forests, Forestry England offers:

- walking trails
- cycling trails
- family events
- parking
- cafes
- picnic sites
- and much more

Some questions to discuss:

If you were managing a forest, what sorts of things would you provide?

Consider where people would park, whether they would want to eat or drink during their visit, and what sorts of activities they would like to do while they were in the forest.







You have already discussed how important trees and forests are – for timber, people and wildlife – what can we all do to ensure they are protected and cared for?



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For more information about Forestry England's sustainable management of the nation's forests, please visit **forestryengland.uk**

