



WATCHING THE UK'S NATURAL WORLD WAKE UP AGAIN AFTER ITS WINTER DORMANCY IS MAGICAL. FROM THE FIRST SNOWDROPS IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, TO THE CARPETS OF BLUEBELLS IN APRIL AND MAY, SPRING IS A WELCOME ARRIVAL AFTER THE COLD MONTHS OF WINTER.



Seeing the return of our insects and the migratory birds which have been in warmer climes for the Winter reminds us that warmer weather and longer days are to come.

#### A TIME TO BLOOM

Spring conditions are perfect for plant growth. Rain showers provide essential water, and increased daylight and warmth from the sun raises the temperature of the air and soil. It can seem as if everything grows quite suddenly. Daffodils and other bulb flowers pop up, and perennial plants start to regrow. Wildflowers such as lesser celandine re-appear on roadsides and in fields. Soon the vibrant new leaves appear on deciduous trees, and when blossom covers blackthorn, hawthorn and cherry trees, the season is in full swing. Later on, it is our nostrils that are first alerted to the fresh wild garlic growing in the woods!

#### **BEE HAPPY**

The air starts to hum again with insect life: butterflies and moths take flight, and queen bumblebees look out for the best spot to start their new colonies.

#### **BUSY BIRDS**

Birds are busy in Spring too. Listen out for Spring's dawn chorus, as birds call to attract mates, defend territories, and prepare for new families in the nest. Some birds (such as buzzards, sky larks and grebes) put on a show in the sky and on the water to win the best mate. And what's the famous audible indicator of Spring? The cuckoo's call!

#### **SOWING AND GROWING**

Gardeners love the Spring. They are rewarded with the blooms of the bulbs they planted in the Autumn and are enjoying sowing their seeds ready for the growing season ahead. With careful planning it's possible to enjoy fresh produce for most of the year. Some types of vegetables can be grown in succession, to provide a longer harvesting window (such as perennial spinach).

### **GET EXPLORING, GROWING, MAKING AND TAKE ACTION!**

We have a great selection of activities for you to get stuck into this Spring, suitable for a range of ages and covering a variety of themes, from exploring and growing to making and taking action.

If you want to get to know your local environment better, and want to enjoy the splendid season of Spring, read on...



This is a guide to help you and your group forage plants for food, sustainably, responsibly and safely.

#### SEEK PERMISSION FROM THE LANDOWNER

Before you start, make sure you seek permission from the landowner or national park.

#### KNOW WHAT YOU ARE PICKING – DO NOT HARVEST FROM UNCOMMON OR RARE SPECIES

We need to protect both ourselves and nature. Wild plants can be rare and protected by law, inedible or even extremely poisonous! Please make sure you identify any wild plants before harvesting them to eat. Use a good field guide or reference book to check the identifying features carefully. If you are unsure, don't take. You may like to invite a local foraging expert to guide your group and help you identify what is safe to eat, such as nettles or wild garlic. There are also websites that can give hints as to what would be seasonally available e.g. Foraging in March: spring's edible plants – Woodland Trust.

#### **ONLY COLLECT FROM PLENTIFUL POPULATIONS**

Please think about what you are collecting and make sure you only collect leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds for food where they are in abundance. Never uproot plants as this can damage them and affect their future growth. It is important that these wild plant populations have the chance to set their own seeds, to secure future generations.

# LEAVE PLENTY BEHIND FOR OTHERS AND FOR WILDLIFE

Think about how much you actually need. Always err on the side of caution, making sure you leave plenty behind. Remember that the wild plants you are harvesting for food are a free resource for other people and are also a vital food source for wildlife, so there needs to be enough to go around.

#### MINIMISE DAMAGE TO THE HABITAT

When you are foraging for wild foods, you are more likely to go "off the beaten track", so remember to take care, step carefully and avoid trampling down whole areas. If you are with your group, make sure you spread out, don't focus all your foraging in the same place.

#### THE LAW AND WILD PLANTS

All wild plants are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). It is illegal to dig up or remove a plant (including algae, lichens and fungi) from the land on which it is growing without permission from the landowner or occupier. Some species are specially protected against picking, uprooting, damage and sale. A list can be found on Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/8.





Broad beans are one of the earliest Spring vegetables you can sow. These large seeds are easy for young children to handle, and as they are fast growing, they make an ideal plant for observing the stages of germination. Place the seed in a jar and after a few days children will see the roots and first leaves emerge from the seed.

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Broad bean seed
- A small plate
- Water
- · A jug
- · A glass jar
- · Piece of kitchen roll or napkin

#### **PREPARATION**

Before your meeting, soak the broad bean seeds in water on a plate for about 1 hour.



Broad beans are legumes, which means they have nitrogen-fixing bacteria in the nodules on their roots. These nodules boost the nitrogen levels in the soil, which in turns helps feed other plants or vegetables, as nitrogen is a critical nutrient for healthy plant growth. Other members of the legume family include peas, sweet peas, chickpeas, clover, lupins and peanuts.

- **1.** Fill your glass jar with water, only about halfway. Swirl the water around and tip it into a jug. Remember not to dry your glass jar out as it needs to be damp.
- **2.** Take your piece of kitchen roll or napkin and place inside your jar. If you have a small jar you can fold the kitchen roll or napkin over. Make sure the kitchen roll or napkin is pressed up against the side of the jar.
- **3.** Then slip your broad bean seed in between the glass and the kitchen roll or napkin.
- **4.** Place your bean on a sunny windowsill.
- **5.** Use the water in the jug and sprinkle a little water on it every day. Be very careful not to over water.
- **6.** You should start to notice your broad bean sprouting after 4 days.
- **7.** After 10 days your broad bean should have grown roots, a stem and leaves.
- **8.** Ask the group to observe which way the roots and stem and leaves are growing, and ask them why they think this is? You can relate this to the new Spring growth that they may see during this season.
- 9. Why not add your broad bean to your garden. Carefully remove the broad bean from the glass jar, without damaging the roots and plant it in a garden pot with compost and water it often.







**AGE 5+** 



**60 MINUTES** 



ACTION

As the days lengthen and the weather warms, birds start to make nests ready for the imminent arrival of eggs. The birds find an ideal nesting spot, one out of reach from predators and sheltered from harsh weather. They will then collect materials to build a comfy and safe nest to raise their chicks. You can help by preparing a bird's nest buffet for them to pick and choose what is best for their nest!

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- A selection of nesting material: pieces of plant material, straw, grass, green leaves, moss, feathers, plant fluff
- A hanging basket or a cage type bird feeder that birds can easily access



Some birds, such as swifts and swallows, will attach their nests to the side of a building or in a sheltered space. Others, such as puffins and sand martins, will make nests in burrows and holes underground. Each birds' nest-building technique is perfectly adapted to the environment where it lives, however, as many UK habitats are in decline, it is now more difficult for some species to find suitable nesting spots and nesting materials.

#### **INSTRUCTIONS**

- **1.** Gather materials for your bird's nest buffet:
  - Starlings use green leaves so collect any clippings when pruning shrubs.
  - House sparrows will use straw and grasses.
  - Blackbirds, robins and song thrushes will camouflage their nests with moss.
  - Remember to provide something soft like feathers or plant fluff or down e.g. cattail fluff or cottonwood down (but not pet hair or human hair).
- Leave these materials in a place where the birds can easily and safely reach them. Take a photo of what you've put out.
- **3.** Spend some time bird watching. Did you see any birds take anything?
- **4.** After a few days have a look at what has been taken. You can take another photo and compare it with the one you took when you left the material out. Can you spot what was the most popular?

**Warning:** Please don't leave pet hair or human hair out as nesting materials due to the use of flea treatments and hair products which could be toxic to birds.

HA-HA!

What kind of bird works at a construction site? A crane!



Herbs are a good way to add flavour to food without adding sugar or salt. Chives are perennial herbs, with a smell and flavour similar to onions (they are in the same plant family). They are great for adding zip to bread, cheese, eggs and potato. They're often snipped with scissors rather than being chopped and have a pretty purple flower which can be used as a garnish.

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- · Plant pots (recycled if possible)
- Peat-free seed compost
- Hand trowel
- · Gloves (optional)
- · Chive seeds
- A watering can with a fine rose (spout with holes in)
- · Used and washed lolly sticks
- Pencil
- For each pot you sow seeds in, 1 recycled 1-litre plastic bottle with the top chopped off

#### **INSTRUCTIONS**

- **1.** Wash your pots if they have been recycled or previously used for growing.
- 2. Fill your pots will compost, nearly to the top.



Because of their strong smell, chives make ideal companions to other plants, controlling pests like aphids, beetles and slugs, while giving a home to beneficial creatures and encouraging pollination. This is a better way to stop crops from failing, rather than using chemicals which are harmful to wildlife and not kind to our bodies.

- **3.** Chive seeds are tiny, so carefully space them out over the surface of the compost (sow thinly), around 20 per 9 cm diameter pot.
- **4.** Gently sprinkle a layer of compost over the seeds and carefully water the seeds.
- **5.** Label your pots with the date using a lolly stick.
- **6.** For each pot, take the top of the plastic bottle and place it over the pot to create a mini greenhouse environment to help the seeds germinate.
- 7. Put the pots in a light, warm place a windowsill is ideal. The seeds will germinate within two to three weeks. When they are a few millimetres tall, the plastic bottle tops can be removed.
- **8.** When the seedlings are about 3 cm tall, they are ready for potting on. Take another pot, fill with compost and make five individual holes.
- **9.** Gently remove five of the seedlings (be careful not to damage the roots) and place them in the five holes. Water and keep warm.
- **10.** When it is warm enough outside, the pots can be placed in a sheltered spot.
- **11.** As the plants get stronger, they can be planted into a larger container or planted out into a border.





Watching garden birds is great fun, and it is easy to attract them to your garden with a bird feeder. Temporary food shortages can happen any time of year but providing extra food for the birds during the Spring breeding season is particularly important.

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- · Carton, washed
- Plastic bags
- Scissors
- · Non-toxic glue
- Stapler
- Wire
- Twigs
- · Bird seed, good quality

# DID YOU KNOW? Birds are incredibly busy during the Spring breeding

Birds are incredibly busy during the Spring breeding season, and it's essential that they can find enough food for themselves and their chicks. Blackbirds pick out earthworms from the ground, and tits and chaffinches pick off caterpillars from plants. If it turns too dry, cold or wet, it can reduce the availability of these food sources, having a knock-on effect on the birds' survival.

- **1.** Cut a hole in the side of the clean carton about 5 cm (2 inches) from the bottom. This will be the doorway of the feeder.
- **2.** Cut out some leaf shapes from your plastic bags and stick them with glue onto your carton.
- **3.** Push several small holes in the bottom of the carton with scissors so that water can drain out when it rains.
- **4.** Staple the opening at the top closed. Pierce another hole in the top and thread the wire through for hanging up the bird feeder.
- **5.** Pierce a hole just under the doorway and repeat on the opposite side. Then poke a twig through the small holes under the doorway to create a perch for the birds.
- **6.** Now add the good quality bird seed into the carton.
- **7.** Your bird feeder is now ready to hang in your garden or meeting space, remember to keep it topped up.





Phenology is the study of seasonal natural phenomena. Observing the nature around us can help us to feel more connected to it, and regularly recording details of seasonal changes can help us to identify any longer-term patterns of change. Spring is the perfect time to get outdoors and take a closer look at what nature is up to.

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- Access to an outside space, such as your local park, green space or woodland
- Notebook

#### **INSTRUCTIONS**

1. There are lots of different signs of Spring that you can look out for. The key is to go out on a regular basis, so that you know where to look, what to look for and record the particular change you are looking for when it happens. If you enjoy sketching or photography, why not sketch what you see or take photos.

DID YOU KNOW?

If you want to add your findings to a national database, take a look at the Woodland Trust's Nature Calendar website:

https://naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk/
This is a biological record that dates back as far as
1736. There is a list of selected plants, animals and
fungi that they are particularly interested in, which will
help us understand how nature is affected by weather
and climate change.

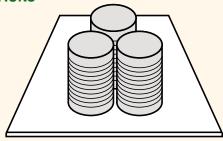
- 2. Snowdrops are one of the earliest indicators that Spring is on the way, and they can sometimes appear as early as January! These little blooms really do brighten up the darkest garden on the darkest day.
- **3.** By late February we start to see the glorious daffodils popping up in grass verges and gardens, a cheery promise of Spring warmth to come.
- **4.** The birds like to sing us into Spring, and the dawn chorus starts in early March, as the birds start their calls to attract mates and to defend their territories. They also start nest-building.
- **5.** March is the perfect time for finding frogspawn in ponds and streams.
- **6.** In March and April, we start to see queen bumblebees hunting for nectar again and looking for new places to start their colonies.
- **7.** Next comes the blossom on cherry and hawthorn trees, a welcome sight to brighten up those dark bare branches.
- **8.** April brings back the swallows from the warmth of Africa, ready to enjoy a banquet of our insects.
- **9.** Not forgetting the vibrant carpets of mauve bluebells at the end of April and into May, which really do signal that Summer is coming, as they have to flower before the woodland leaves appear above them!



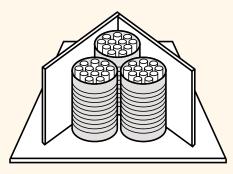


Britain has over 200 species of solitary bees; these differ from bumblebees in that they build single nest cells for their larvae. Some species nest in tunnels in sandy banks or old bricks; others use hollow stems of dead plants or old wood to create their nests. You can create a habitat for solitary bees by making a bee hotel.

#### **INSTRUCTIONS**



1. Place the piece of wood you have chosen for the back of your bee hotel on the ground. Put wood glue on the bottom of the cans and stick them to the wood in a triangle shape (one at the top and two underneath). Leave to dry for an hour.

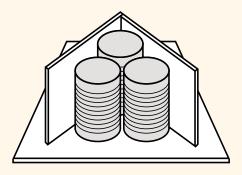


**3.** Cut the bamboo canes into short sections the depth of the tin cans. Place a little PVA glue on the end of each cane and push it into the can. Fill up the can with the canes.

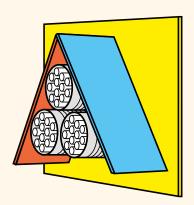
**Warning:** You may want to cut the bamboo canes in advance, but make sure there are no sharp pieces of wood. Also check the tins for any sharp edges.

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- A thin square piece of wood for the back of the hotel
- · Non-toxic wood glue
- Three clean tin cans (with no sharp edges)
- · Two thin pieces of wood for the roof
- Bamboo canes (recycled if possible)
- · Non-toxic PVA glue
- · Non-toxic paint



**2.** Take the pieces of wood for your roof and place them in an inverted V to form two sides of a triangle round the cans. Glue the wood into place and leave them to dry for an hour.



**4.** Now your bee hotel is nearly ready. Paint it in bright colours and patterns and leave it in a quiet, sunny (ideally south facing) place outside, ready for the bees.





There are 59 species of butterflies in the UK. Most are resident, but some such as the Painted Lady migrate here every Summer to breed. Butterflies can be seen as early as March when a range of flowers start to bloom. Support your local environment and create a butterfly friendly area in your garden or communal area.

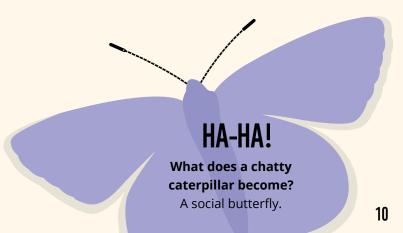
#### WHAT YOU NEED

- A bamboo cane
- A recycled bottle top
- · Some recycled wrapping paper and laminator
- · A tack/drawing pin or similar
- Cotton wool
- · Sugar and water syrup
- Blu tack



Butterflies and moths are indicators of the health of our environment as they are vital to the ecosystem, both as pollinators and part of the food chain. Numbers of butterflies in the UK have decreased significantly since the 1970s, but you can help by planting butterfly friendly plants and providing habitats for caterpillars.

- **1.** Cut the wrapping paper in to a large flower shape and laminate.
- **2.** Place the bottle top in the middle of the laminated flower shape and push the tack through both the bottle top and the flower shape so the point of the tack comes through.
- **3.** Place a small ball of Blu Tack at one end of the bamboo cane to keep the top from falling off.
- **4.** Push the laminated shape and bottle top point first into the Blu Tack.
- **5.** Place in the garden in full sun, add a small amount of cotton wool and drip some of the sugar syrup onto the cotton wool.





Wild garlic is widespread across the UK. It is usually found in deciduous woodland and favours damp areas. Its Spring flowers provide an important early source of nectar to pollinators, and its bulbs are eaten by wild boars! Get your wellies on, use the foraging wild food tips in this pack, and see if you can find wild garlic leaves to make your own (super tasty) pesto.

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- · Use our 'Top tips on foraging wild foods sustainably'
- 150g wild garlic leaves
- 50g parmesan, finely grated
- · 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- Zest of ½ a lemon and a good few squeezes of juice
- 50g pine nuts, toasted
- · 150ml rapeseed oil
- Salt and pepper
- · Food processor
- Glass jar
- Labels

This will make a 275g jar of wild pesto.



Wild garlic is an indicator plant (a measure of environmental conditions) for UK ancient woodland. Ancient woodlands are woodland areas that have been in existence since the UK's first accurate maps (1600 in England and Wales and 1750 in Scotland). These habitats have been around for so long that they have developed a unique community of plants and animals that are not found anywhere else. Ancient woodland once covered much of the UK, but now it covers only 2.5 % of the UK's land area.

#### **INSTRUCTIONS**

- 1. Place the wild garlic leaves in a food processor along with the parmesan, garlic, lemon zest and pine nuts. Blitz to a rough paste. With the processor at a slow pace, season with salt and pepper and add almost all the oil.
- **2.** Add a few good squeezes of lemon juice, taste and season with more salt and pepper if needed.
- **3.** Transfer the pesto to a clean jar and top up with the remaining oil.
- **4.** This will keep up to two weeks, so don't forget to write the date it was made on the label. You can also make smaller jars and sell them to raise money for your group.

#### HA-HA!

How many vampires showed up to the garlic eating competition? I don't know, it was countless...

# WILD GARLIC AND NETTLE SOUP



**AGE 11+** 



**60 MINUTES** 



We've probably all had experience of coming into contact with nettles! They are incredibly common across the UK, and although widely considered a weed, they are great for wildlife. Small tortoiseshell and peacock butterfly caterpillars use them as food, ladybirds eat the aphids feeding there, and birds eat the seeds. Humans can also use nettles, just beware of their defences.

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- · Use our 'Top tips on foraging wild foods sustainably'
- · 1 tbsp vegetable oil, plus extra for drizzling
- · 25g vegetable margarine
- 1 onion, finely diced
- 1 leek, finely diced
- · 2 celery sticks, thinly sliced
- · 1 carrot, finely diced
- I small potato, finely diced
- · 1.2L vegetable stock
- DID YOU KNOW?

Nettles grow easily in disturbed ground and will quickly colonise building sites and raked soil. Although they are often unwanted, they can be a lifeline for local wildlife. Leaving a wild area in your garden can help diversify the habitat you are creating for wildlife. Over 60 % of the total landcover of four of Britain's major cities is 'green', with residential gardens making up 24 – 36 % of each city. Let's make those green spaces as diverse as possible, to encourage a wider variety of wildlife to make its home there.

- 300g young nettle leaves (wear protective gardening gloves)
- 200g wild garlic leaves (keep any flowers if you have them)
- 3 tbsp milk or dairy free alternative
- · Salt and pepper
- Blender
- · Bowls to serve

- 1. Heat the oil and vegetable margarine in a large pan. Add the onion, leek, celery, carrot, potato and a good pinch of salt, and stir until everything is well coated. Cover and sweat gently for 15-20mins, stirring occasionally so the vegetables don't burn.
- **2.** Pour in the stock and simmer for 10 mins. Add the nettles in several batches, stirring, then add the wild garlic leaves and simmer for 2 minutes.
- **3.** Remove from the heat and add to a blender and blend. Return to the heat and stir through the milk/dairy free alternative, then taste and add salt and pepper if needed.
- **4.** Place into bowls and drizzle a little extra oil and decorate with the garlic flowers if you have them.





The UK's biodiversity depends upon a healthy insect population. Insects are important because they pollinate plants and provide food for birds and mammals. In addition to this, they break down and decompose organic matter, by turning dead animals and waste into healthy, fertile soil. Many insects rely on plants for shelter and food. You can give them a helping hand by growing wildflowers from seed bombs.

#### WHAT YOU NEED

- · Mixing bowl
- Wildflower meadow seeds (native to the UK) you can buy these, or if you're planning in advance, you can collect them from the wildflowers in your own garden in the Summer and keep them dry until Spring
- Peat-free compost
- Powdered clay you can buy this from craft shops
- Water



UK wildflower meadows are a beautiful and rich habitat that is home to an unparalleled variety of plants, insects, birds and mammals. Nearly 1,400 species of pollinators and other insects rely on plants in wildflower meadows for their survival. However, the UK has lost 97 % of its wildflower meadows since the 1930s, threatening this unique habitat and all that need it.

- **1.** In a bowl, mix one-part seeds with five-parts compost and three parts powdered clay.
- **2.** Slowly add water, until the mixture becomes sticky.
- **3.** Using your hands, roll the mixture into balls (golf ball size) and set them to one side to dry.
- **4.** Once dry, find a bare patch of soil in your outside space and throw your seed bombs. Some may break open, others may stay as they are.
- **5.** In a few weeks check back for signs of germination and seedlings. In which areas did the plants grow? Make a note for next time.





# **GET MAKING, GROWING AND EXPLORING**

These seasonal resources will get your group out and about, exploring and enjoying the nature on your doorstep. Whether you are based in a city or the countryside, these activities will help to guide your investigations, and provide a framework to understand how small actions really can make a difference.

The UK has many beautiful and diverse landscapes, each of which provides a unique habitat for a range of plants and animals. Our wildlife is adapted to these habitats and our seasonal variations in day length, temperature and weather.

However, climate change, urbanisation and habitat loss mean the UK's wildlife is under threat like never before. We invite you to celebrate what UK nature has to offer and to take action to protect and restore it for future generations.



The UK has lost 97% of its wildflower meadows since the 1930s.



The land required overseas to supply the UK's demand for timber has increased threefold since 2011 (from 28,000 km² to 84,000 km² – an area greater than the size of Scotland).



Parts of the UK may run out of water by 2040.



Over a third of assessed UK seabirds have declined by 20% or more since the 1990s largely due to climate change affecting food availability.

#### **BADGE IT UP**

These activities can be used to support a range of interest badges across uniform groups:

#### Rainhows:

Nature, Recycling, Fruit and Veg and Healthy Mind badges

#### **Brownies:**

Grow your Own, Mindfulness and Zero Waste badges

#### Rangers:

Cooking badge

#### Beavers:

Explore and Gardener badges

#### **Cubs, Scouts and Explorers:**

Chef, Environmental Conservation and Naturalist badges

A Million Hands programme is one-way Scouts can take action and achieve their Community Impact Staged Activity Badge. WWF are supporting the Protecting Our Environment Theme www.scouts.org.uk/about-us/helpothers/community

#### BE RESOURCEFUL!







## HOW YOU CAN HELP UK WILDLIFE

There are lots of things you and your group can do to take action and help protect UK wildlife and create a sustainable future for us all:



#### HOW BIG IS YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT?

Measure it here: https://footprint.wwf.org.uk/#/



#### **HOW SUSTAINABLE IS YOUR DIET?**

Find out more here: wwf.org.uk/what-we-do/livewell



#### WANT TO TAKE SMALL STEPS TO HELP NATURE?

Find out how you can help UK wildlife with From Grey to Green here: wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-07/WWF\_Green\_Spaces\_Resource\_A\_Million\_Hands.pdf



#### **INSPIRED TO TAKE MORE ACTION?**

Have a look at 21 actions activity pack, developed by WWF's Youth Ambassadors here: **wwf.org.uk/get-involved/youth-engagement** 



#### **REACHING OUT TO YOUNG PEOPLE**

Find out how WWF is inspiring the next generation with our young people's resources at wwf.org.uk/what-can-i-do/inspire-the-next-generation

