

Roots to *Wellbeing*

Supporting wellbeing
in schools through
growing and nature



This resource has been created to help teachers support children and young people's wellbeing through growing and nature-based practical activities in school, inspired by the RHS *Roots to Wellbeing* training course.

Developed in collaboration with children's mental health experts [Place2Be](#) and using the 5 Ways to Wellbeing as a framework, each activity encourages children to engage with plants and nature to support their wellbeing. The 5 Ways to Wellbeing were developed by the New Economics Foundation and identified five key actions around the themes of social relationships, physical activity, awareness, learning, and giving to support mental health and wellbeing.

The activities in this pack link to:

- PSHE
- Science
- Art and design
- Literacy

Following completion of the activities, teachers can support children in developing their wellbeing awareness in response to each activity, using the reflection activity suggestions.



Connect: *Growing Micro Greens*



Learning objectives

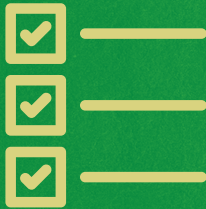
- To develop social interaction skills and confidence when interacting with others through the care of plants
- To understand how to grow micro greens and what is required for their care

Children will work in pairs or groups to plant and care for containers of micro greens.



Activity overview

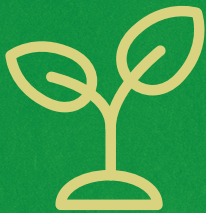
This activity will engage children in an experience of caring for plants, shared as a group. They will experience a feeling of connection both with others and nature by interacting with living plants. This in turn can foster a wider response from an individual to the natural environment.



You will need

- Small containers (such as recycled food trays, plant pots or even paper cups)
- Compost
- Seeds (such as radish, broccoli, rocket or cabbage)
- Labels
- Access to water
- A watering can with a fine spout (or make one of your own using our handy [milk bottle watering can resource](#))
- Scissors for harvesting

You will also need somewhere warm to encourage seeds to grow such as a bright windowsill, when seedlings have appeared.



Micro greens are the seedlings of any edible plants that are harvested soon after sprouting and before many leaves have grown. They make a tasty snack or can be added to a dish as a garnish. You can buy seed packets of micro greens as described or, if you have any leftover vegetable seeds they will all grow into micro greens! Whole coriander seed and dried peas are fairly inexpensive from the supermarket and reliable growers all year round. You can even use seeds harvested from sunflowers and nasturtiums in your garden if you have them, when they have finished flowering.



THE ACTIVITY

This growing activity can be done at any time of the year, indoors on a windowsill. Children should work in pairs or groups to plant the seeds and care for them.

As they carry out each step, encourage children to share their thoughts about sowing the seeds and how it feels to be planting something to grow, that they can eat!

- 1

Fill containers with compost and use the watering can to wet the compost
- 2

Sprinkle seeds thickly across the surface of the compost and cover with a thin layer of compost
- 3

Label the container with the date and name of the seed
- 4

Water again carefully
- 5

Leave the container somewhere warm until the seeds start growing (they don't usually need light at this stage)
- 6

When you can see the seedlings, move the container to a bright windowsill
- 7

When the seedlings have a few leaves, about 4cm in height, use scissors to harvest them
- 8

Taste individual seedlings or make a delicious mixture as a mini salad!

REFLECTION ACTIVITY



Encourage pupils to keep a journal or sketchbook where they can keep notes, drawings and photos to track their learning through the activity. Include a section that they can complete to say how they felt about connecting to nature in this way. For example, 'I didn't like getting my hands dirty in the compost but it was interesting to see the seed growing'. Create an opportunity for show and tell of their journal or sketchbook, if possible with parents to be included.

Be active: *Scavenger Hunt*



Learning objectives

- To identify a variety of objects in nature, encouraging children to notice their natural environment
- To be active outdoors and provide a stress-reduction opportunity

Children will be active outdoors, using a scavenger hunt challenge to encourage engagement with nature.



Activity overview

This activity will engage children with nature in a fun way, supporting stress reduction and a motivation to be active. Being active has a direct positive impact on our physical health; and good physical health is likely to result in being mentally well.



You will need

- An outdoor space (ideally one you have explored that will offer opportunities to find a number of the items on the scavenger list)
- Clipboards
- Pencils
- Collecting bags
- A timer/stopwatch
- Template list of things to find



THE ACTIVITY

This activity can work in all seasons, with opportunities to explore nature and see how it changes throughout the year. Children could work individually, in pairs or groups.

Increase the sense of challenge by setting a time limit in which children must gather the items listed, or other items of interest they identify.

- 1

Explain to children they must stay in to the identified space for the challenge
- 2

Give each child/pair/group a copy of the list of items to find, a clipboard, pencil and collecting bag
- 3

Encourage children to explore all the areas within the space– muddy, low down, reaching high
- 4

Remind them there is space on the list for them to find additional items of interest
- 5

If the item is collectable they can add it to their bag, but remind them not to try and pick up bugs or pick plants/flowers unless they've fallen onto the ground
- 6

Set an appropriate amount of time and start the clock!

When the timer finishes, call the group back together and invite them to share what they have found. Did they spot anything different from the scavenger hunt list? Celebrate their finds, which could now be used to create a nature table in the classroom and inspire creativity using one or more of the items as a story starter, or drawing pictures of what they have seen.

This activity can also be delivered using smartphones or devices, instead of collecting bags, collating a set of pictures using a photo collage app e.g PicCollage

REFLECTION ACTIVITY



Complete a before and after activity in which thoughts and feelings about going outside are captured



A ‘round’, where each pupil in turn gives an adjective or an action to describe their experience



Scavenger Hunt List

☐

ACORN

☐

BIRD

☐

BROWN LEAF

☐

FLOWER

☐

GRASS

☐

GREEN LEAF

☐

LADYBUG

☐

PEBBLE

☐

PINE CONE

☐

SPIDER WEB

☐

Add your own items

☐

Add your own items

☐

Add your own items

☐

Add your own items

☐

Add your own items

☐

Add your own items

Take notice: *Sensory Hands*



Learning objectives

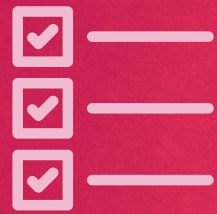
- To collect natural objects to represent the five senses
- To learn to take notice of the natural environment using the senses

Children will use their senses to take notice and explore their natural surroundings.



Activity overview

This activity will engage children in multi-sensory activities in which they can be present to the moment, using their senses to explore their surroundings moment by moment. To stop and look at an object from nature or plant and to smell and feel it, evokes gratitude and we begin to be more alive to the things around us. Children will be encouraged to develop their awareness of how they feel in response to what they are looking at, and share their thoughts.



You will need

- Paper, pens
- Double sided tape
- Scissors
- An outdoor space to explore



THE ACTIVITY

Draw around an adult's hand (the larger hand will give more space for collecting). Make enough copies for one per child. Stick a strip of double sided tape to each finger.

Explain to children they are going to explore the designated space identifying different things in nature, using their five senses.

Start with some concentrated focus time to identify and talk about the five senses.

Invite children to stand still for a whole minute and notice what they can hear, see, feel, smell, and even taste. Remind children of what the five senses are as you count them on your fingers

- 1** Give out a hand sheet, one per child, and remind them to remove the top layer of the tape on each finger
- 2** Invite children to explore the designated space, finding something to stick on to each of the fingers of their hand shape to represent each of the five senses
- 3** By the end of the activity they should have found a natural object for sound, touch, see, hear and taste
- 4** Once they have filled their hand shape, invite children to share what they have found if they would like to and explain why they chose it

This activity could be completed as part of a nature walk, and repeated in a different location or in the same location at a different time of the year, as a means of noticing changes in the seasons.



REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Jot down all the words that come to mind from the experience of taking notice. See if you can make this into a poem describing how it felt.

Learn: *Soil Exploration*



Learning objectives

- To develop understanding that soil is full of living things and a life giver, and not just ‘dirt’
- To understand there are different types of soil

Children will engage in learning experiences with a focus on soil.



Activity overview

People have an intrinsic need to discover, learn and know. This manifests as a sense of questioning, exploring and researching, and often with varied and special interest. When learning is welcomed and valued and there are opportunities to fulfil this innate need, individuals experience a feeling of strength and vitality. There is a feeling of increased confidence as knowledge and understanding increases as well as the process of learning being fun. This activity supports learning about soil.

You will need



- Bowls of soil (large enough for a few children to put their hands in at the same time)
- Small jugs or cups
- Bowls of water and soap for handwashing
- Nail brushes
- Paper towels, some for hand drying
- Magnifiers
- [Soil dwellers spotter guide](#)
- [Soil texture test flow diagram](#)
- [Flowering Weeds Spotter](#)

Talking points:

- It’s ok to get soil on their hands and it will not do them any harm; they will be washing their hands with soap and water at the end of the activity
- It’s important to not put their hands in their mouths after touching the soil
- If they find any creatures in the soil just observe them, be gentle and do not harm them

Give each group a copy of the [soil dwellers spotter guide](#) (or display on a whiteboard/tablet)

THE ACTIVITY

Begin by taking the children outside and looking at plants growing. Ask children what they think is holding the plants up and how are they growing?

Have a look for a flowering weed such as a dandelion (use our [flowering weed spotter guide](#) to help) and dig one up so children can look at the parts of the plant that are normally under the soil.

Explain that the plant needs the soil to give it food and water to grow through its roots (just like we

need food and water to grow). The soil is full of tiny bits of food for plants and for other creatures living there, many of which are so small we cannot see them.

Collect bowls of soil from your school grounds and if possible collected from very different areas, making sure you dig down a little with a hand trowel so that you are looking at soil, not compost that may have been added to the surface.

- 1

Put their hands in the soil and describe to each other how it feels (there is no wrong answer and they may choose to describe their physical or emotional feelings)
- 2

Put a small amount of soil onto a paper towel. What happens to the paper towel? If it leaves a wet mark – where has the water come from?
- 3

Gently take turns to move the soil around and all look with magnifiers to observe what it is made up of and if anything is living there!
- 4

Use the [soil dwellers spotter guide](#) to identify any found creatures
- 5

Pour a little water onto the soil and ask the children to describe what happens to it
- 6

Take a golf ball sized amount of soil and follow the [soil texture test flow diagram](#) Is the soil sandy or more like clay?
- 7

Explain that different types of soil will help different plants to grow well and understanding soil can help us grow plants more successfully
- 8

Ask the children to wash their hands properly with soap, water and a nail brush

Why should we put the soil back?

Possible answers:

- Soil is home for many creatures
- Soil is precious for growing plants
- Creatures in the soil need to go back to where they were taken from, to carry on their lives
- Soil takes a very long time to be created, it can take up to 1,000 years to form one teaspoon full!



REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Invite children to participate in a ‘round’, where each pupil in turn contributes something with the sentence ‘the most interesting thing I learnt was...’

Give: *Seeded paper*



Learning objectives

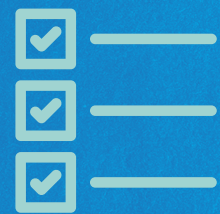
- To create seeded paper using recycled materials
- To develop awareness of the impact of giving as an activity to support wellbeing

Children will create seeded paper, and give as a gift to encourage others to grow



Activity overview

Giving to others builds our connections with people and fosters feelings of kindness and empathy, creating feelings of gratitude in the recipient. Giving can include spending time with another person, listening to them, sharing with them knowledge or skills, or creating and giving them a gift. This activity will engage children so they can experience the wellbeing that comes from creating and giving a gift, inspired by nature.



You will need

- Paper to recycle
- Empty, clean bottle with a lid
- Flower or herb seeds
- Small container to hold seeds
- Small containers for individuals to mix up their own paper pulp and seeds
- Sieve
- Tea towel
- Newspaper
- Warm water
- Food colouring
- Cookie cutters
- Pencil to make a hole
- Ribbon



THE ACTIVITY

Find non-glossy, discarded paper (ready for recycling). Place flower seeds into your small container. Show the children a range of seeds and plants and explain that one tiny seed will grow into a whole new plant.

- 1** Tear up the paper into tiny pieces and place them in the bottle

2 Pour over enough warm water to cover all the pieces and screw the lid on tight and leave to soak for 10 minutes

3 Children can then take turns to shake the bottle until the paper starts to break down into pulp (you may need to add more warm water)

4 Line the sieve with the tea towel and pour in the paper pulp, letting as much water as possible drain out

5 Squeeze out more water by squeezing the tea towel with the paper pulp in it over a sink

6 Place the paper pulp into a bowl and mix up with some drops of food colouring
- 7** Ask children to take a small pinch of flower seeds and a handful of paper pulp, place them in a small container and mix them up with their hands

8 Place a cookie cutter onto some folded newspaper and fill with seedy pulp

9 Use fingers to squash the paper pulp as flat as possible, into the corners of the cookie cutter

10 Carefully lift the cookie cutter, leaving the wet paper shape behind on the newspaper

11 Make a hole with a blunt pencil near the top of the shape

12 Leave the paper shape to dry completely then attach a ribbon, by threading it through the hole

As a class, create some growing instructions to give with the seeded paper. You could even tie the seeded paper to a pot ready to give as a growing gift!

Growing instructions:

- Fill a small pot with compost
- Place the seeded paper onto the surface of the pot
- Sprinkle some compost over the top to cover it
- Water the compost (until it comes out of the bottom of the pot)
- Place the pot on a window sill and keep the compost moist
- Have patience and wait for your flowers to grow!



REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Invite children to participate in a ‘round’, where each pupil in turn contributes something with the sentence ‘when I made (gift) and gave it to (name) it made me feel...’



For more inspiration and ideas visit
rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening where
you will find further resources and
information about how the Campaign
for School Gardening can help you and
the children and young people you
work with get into growing and nature.



[@RHSSchools](https://twitter.com/RHSSchools)



[@rhsgrassroots](https://www.instagram.com/rhsgrassroots)



[rhsschoolgardening](https://www.facebook.com/rhsschoolgardening)