



Natural arts & crafts

Nature is a perfect source of inspiration for those interested in art and crafts and what better way is there to help you notice and embrace the beauty of the natural world around us. You don't need to be good at drawing or painting, you don't need to be a trained artist and for many of the ideas here you don't need expensive resources.

Pieces can be worked on individually and taken home or maybe you'd prefer a larger scale group project instead. Favourite activities can be repeated throughout the year with quite different results achieved as the seasons change, this can be a lovely way to notice the cyclical environment around us.

Natural objects:

Using tactile natural materials to create nature -inspired pieces of art is an effective way to immerse someone in nature, not only are they spending time noticing details that might have previously passed them by they are also working with their hands and exploring textures.

Air dried clay

An extremely versatile product that can be used to create simple decorations including decorative tiles, hanging plaques, bowls and mini sculptures. Why not create a miniature scene with fungi, log piles with insects and animals? Or use natural finds as intricate pattern and mark makers on clay discs? Air dry clay can also be painted once dry with lots of online tips on what to use.



Seasonal wreaths

High impact but simple to create. Willow or similar materials can be used to make wreaths from scratch or pre-brought and re-used again and again. Just add foraged finds with wire, string or glue and accessorize with existing decorations and ribbons if required.



Pebble painting

Quick and easy. Take your group for a walk in nature and keep an eye out for small pebbles or rocks which can be taken away and decorated. Maybe the stone is the shape of a beetle or a hedgehog? Perhaps someone likes the colour and shape and would like to decorate it with their favourite saying or kind words. As well as being lovely takeaway pieces of art these can also be left around a site for people to find which can bring a moment of joy and surprise to the finder.



Foraged art

Nature provides us with so many opportunities to explore and find interesting bits and pieces on our journey

Mud painting & nature paint brushes

A free and easy way to create great sensory art, it smells earthy, it involves handling lots of textures and it can rustle and sound scratchy as you bundle, stir and paint.

Gather different grasses and leaves and bunch them together with string to form a brush. Different species will give different results and if little bits drop off it doesn't matter as it will add texture to the painting. These brushes work with all sorts of paint mediums but why not try it with mud?

A small trowel of mud will make a significant amount of paint once mixed with water, and a little washing up liquid to help with flow. Mud gathered from different places will vary in colour and create a fabulous range of earthy tones. A thin mud solution will provide a lovely colour wash whereas a thick layer could even be scratched into with a stick. But be sure to only take from places that have given you permission and collect only clean soil. If in doubt use up what's left of a bag of bought compost.



Foraged creature collages

Using found leaves, foliage and twigs to make pictures is a tried and tested activity that work for all ages and abilities. Encourage your group to think about the leaves they have collected, what is their shape, colour, texture and size? Do the objects you've found lend themselves to a creating a particular creature? Provide a large piece of paper or card if you are working indoors or find a space on the floor under a tree or besides a bench and set your group on their way.



Beauty looms or journey sticks

Y shaped sticks that can be wrapped with colourful wool or ribbon that can then have objects woven or tucked in to create a visual representation of your favourite things from nature. Taking a pre-prepared stick on a walk and picking things up along the way works well. A weaving frame made from foraged sticks is an alternative version which incorporates natural finds into the weaving of a woollen panel or swatch or maybe you could create hanging mobiles instead?



Nature crowns

Probably one of the simplest ways to have fun with foraged finds and surprisingly popular with adults and children. Cut strips of thin flexible card to approximately 6 cm wide and long enough to go around a person's head one and a half times and stick double sided tape along the whole length. Make this into a crown by peeling back the tape and sticking it together making a hoop. It's often best to do this on the person's head who will be wearing and making the crown to get a good fit. The crown is then ready to be decorated with whatever natural finds you have supplied. Grasses, seed heads or leaves work really well. The variety of styles you'll see will surprise you. seed heads or leaves work really well. The variety of styles you'll see will surprise you.

Pattern & colour

As you'd expect pattern and colour plays a huge part in nature's splendour. If we take five minutes to look around colour and pattern is everywhere, sometimes obvious and other times hidden away under a leaf or on an insects wing.

Flower pressing

A heavy book and some colour free tissue paper makes for a quick and easy way to press flowers and leaves found in your green space. Wildflowers should not be picked and others only with the permission of the grower. Colours will be at their best if the pressing takes place as soon as possible after picking fresh flowers or within a day of picking up fallen leaves. Once pressed you will have a great resource to make all sorts of artifacts; decorate cards, create a panel to hang in a window, make a seasonal journal and see how the colours change throughout the year. Maybe add to nature crowns or imprint them into clay decorations.



Flower pounding

Otherwise known as Hapa Zome, flower pounding is the art of transferring the natural pigment of flowers and plants onto a cloth or paper. Place your piece of nature onto a pale piece of cloth or paper on a hard surface and position three sheets of kitchen roll over it or another piece of cloth. Remembering where you have placed the object, hammer over it carefully for a minute or so and then carefully lift the kitchen roll and top piece of cloth away. You'll be left with a simple print on the fabric or paper below. At this stage you can add more flowers and create a montage or you can use pen and ink and incorporate it into the artwork. Anything heavy can be used as the hammer but smaller more controlled items work best like a palm sized smooth stone or the back of a big spoon. As this one can be a bit noisy it maybe more suited to an outdoor environment.



Mandalas

Similar to foraged creatures focus on circular form. Mandalas can be small or large and are only constrained by the time and space available or by the number of items you can find. Instructions can be found [here](#).



Photography

One of the most accessible ways to notice and record nature at its finest. Most of us carry mobile phones that include a camera whilst some of us may have sophisticated camera kits. Both offer us the opportunity to spend time connecting with nature through the lens. Organise a walk or a visit to a favourite place and set a series of photographic tasks that focusses attention on nature.

Interesting subjects could include; The Beauty of Autumn Colours, Detailed Natural Textures, Find the Extraordinary in the Ordinary, Look up or Look down, Tiny or Tremendous, Beauty in Decay or Patterns (found or created yourself). The opportunities are endless.



 **Top tips**

Download more activity ideas at:
cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-connection-toolkits



1. Make sure that if you are using natural finds you forage responsibly and think carefully about what you take from nature. Fallen items are ok but make sure you leave some items for the wildlife that needs it. Do not cut or pick flowers, seeds or foliage unless it is in plentiful supply and again only take what you need and be mindful of the mother plant and doing any damage. Those seeds are next year's beautiful bounty. If you are foraging on private property, be sure to have the correct permissions to be there.

2. Why not use your pieces of arts and crafts and create an art trail around your building, outdoor location or in a public space (with permission). Art trails can be simple displays of work, or each piece could mark a spot with a special meaning or maybe even a place for someone else to give some art and crafting a go; a little pop up pebble painting station or a natural weaving installation to add to with passer-by's own finds?

3. Leaving pieces of art in a shared space for people to find is an amazing thing to do but think about the health and safety of your piece(s), is it a trip hazard or could it fall over and harm someone? Also make sure that nothing in nature is damaged or destroyed in the making or displaying of your pieces.

4. Easy to see or find inspiration for natural art and craft activities:

- Leaves and foliage
- Flowers and seedheads
- Fungi and mosses
- Beach combing finds
- Sunrise and sunset
- Birds and feathers
- Fruits and nuts
- Insects: buterflies. bees, beetles moths
- The changing seasons