



# National Children's Gardening Week 2023

May 27<sup>th</sup>  
to  
June 4<sup>th</sup>

In support of [National Children's Gardening Week](#), The Ernest Cook Trust and VICTA have created this guide which contains a range of inspiring activities that use gardening as the theme to explore the [five ways to wellbeing](#).

The activities require very little equipment, opting for recycled or foraged materials where possible, and can be adapted to suit whatever is available to you. Freedom and creativity are encouraged along every step of the way and although aimed at children, all ages will benefit from taking part.

Take the time to [notice](#) nature, [connect](#) with others, [give](#) back, [learn](#) something new and get [active](#) on your journey towards a deeper connection with nature and improved wellbeing.

[www.ernestcooktrust.org.uk](http://www.ernestcooktrust.org.uk)

# Make your own Terrarium

Connect with nature while carefully foraging for the specimens to feature in your terrarium.

Let your emotions lead your decisions, only collecting samples of those which bring joy and inspire you.

That may be an assemblage of fuzzy moss fronds, a pert and polished pebble, a jagged shard of bark, or a gnarly twig adorned with lichen. Each of these elements will form a significant part of the tiny ecosystem you create.

## Method:

- Take a walk around your favourite green space. It could be your garden, a nearby park, or woodland. Collect items that you'd like to feature in your terrarium.\*
- At home, find a space that doesn't matter if it gets a bit mucky (it could be outside) and gather your equipment.
- With your gloves on, put a layer of stones or gravel on the base of the jar. The thickness of the layer should be about one fifth of the height of the jar.
- Add the soil layer next. This layer should be slightly thicker than the previous and can be lightly compacted with the back of a spoon.
- Arrange your foraged items on top of the compost so that there are lots of different shapes and heights and making sure that the moss is in contact with the soil and the lichen is in contact with stone or wood (depending on what you found it on).
- Place the lid on the jar and then put your terrarium in a location in your home where you can get up close to appreciate your tiny ecosystem and remember to spray some water into it every couple of weeks or when the soil is dry to the touch.\*\*

\*Remember that moss and lichen are living things so take care not to over-harvest in one area and only take what you intend to use. Lichen should only be taken from fallen branches.

\*\*For more information on how to build and care for your terrarium follow this [link to a page on the Kew Gardens website](#).



## You will need:

- A large glass jar
- A spoon
- A cup of water
- Gardening gloves
- Fine gravel or small stones
- Compost or soil
- Plants that like moisture and shade
- Decorative stones, twigs or bark
- Small toy figures (optional)



# Visit your Local Community Garden



Get active and volunteer at your local community garden.

Help others in your community with all sorts of gardening tasks like planting seeds, watering plants, digging up weeds and turning the soil. Tune into your senses and notice the birdsong, smell the damp compost or the scented herbs, feel your grip on the hand tools as you work and then taste the fruits of your labor – and the vegetables!

## Method:

- You can find a community garden near you by asking friends, family and neighbours. There are also handy search engines to help you locate your nearest community gardening project.
  - [Good to grow's map](#) allows you to search for gardens who are recruiting volunteers
  - [The Royal Horticultural Society](#) also has a 'find a group' function to help you choose the right group for you.
- Once you have found a garden you'd like to visit, make contact by sending an email or giving them a phone call. This is a chance to ask them about what kind of things they do:
  - Are they at an allotment where they grow food?
  - Are they creating attractive green spaces for relaxing in?
  - Are they improving the appearance and biodiversity of residential areas by planting in street planters or on road-side verges?
- As well as finding out what days and times they meet and where.
- When you have arranged your visit, make sure you are well equipped with suitable clothing for the weather and plenty of water to drink. Take any gardening gloves and tools, if you have them, and perhaps pack a picnic if the weather is nice.
- During your visit, try to connect with others, ask questions and learn but also take time to just absorb your surroundings, notice the sounds, the smells, the tastes and the textures.

## You will need:

- To find out where your nearest community garden is – word of mouth/internet search engines
- A way of contacting the group – word of mouth/phone/email
- Suitable clothing – warm/cold/wet weather gear
- Sturdy footwear – walking boots/wellies
- Bottle of water
- Gardening gloves and tools (optional)
- Picnic (optional)

# Sound Mapping

Experience the beauty of your favourite greenspace in a new and unique way by focusing purely on what you can hear. Be still and quiet. Take the time to really notice the sounds around you. You may notice man-made noises like cars honking, the rumble of an approaching train or children playing in the distance. You might tune into the natural sounds of wildlife or the trickling of a nearby stream.

This immersion in your surroundings acts as a mindfulness technique and can help you feel grounded and present.

## Method:

- Pack your equipment before heading out to your favourite greenspace and then find a spot where you can sit undisturbed for at least 15 minutes.\*
- Use the paper or card as your map and mark your location with a cross or the word 'me' in the centre of it.
- Now just sit and listen.
- As the sounds come and go, try to identify what is making them, which direction they are coming from and how near or far they are.
- Make marks, write words, or draw pictures on the map that represent the source and location of each sound.
- Try to stay still for as long as it takes to fill your map.\*
- Your finished map will be a meaningful piece of art that you can take home with you to remind you of your favourite greenspace.

\*It doesn't matter if you only have a couple of minutes, you will still feel the benefits of stopping to take notice of your surroundings. However, the longer you can stay, the more you will notice and better you will feel.



## You will need:

- A greenspace that is safe to sit in
- A piece of paper or card
- A pen or pencil
- Colouring pencils (optional)
- A mat or camping chair to sit on (optional)

# Plants from Pips

Did you know that you can re-grow plants from the food scraps that you probably throw away?

Learn how to limit your food waste, save seeds and care for plants. Watch as those tiny seeds burst into life and grow, just like any other living thing.

Think about how it relates to your own life and what you need to be able to thrive.

You might be surprised at how much you have in common.

## Method:

- Save the seeds from your favourite fruit or vegetables.\*
- You can make simple envelopes to hold your seeds by folding a small piece of square paper in half diagonally and then folding the two corners along the folded edge into one another. Put the seeds into the open corner and then fold it down to secure it closed. You can write what seeds they are on the front.
- When you're ready to plant your seeds, take your scissors and carefully cut 1-2cm slits, about 1cm apart all the way around the bottom end of each toilet roll tube. Working your way around each tube, fold the tabs inwards to form the base of your pot.\*\*
- With your gloves on, almost fill the tubes with compost before adding the seeds and sprinkling a bit more compost on top. Remember to label your tubes by writing the name of the fruit or vegetable on a recycled lollipop stick and pushing into the compost.
- Now, place the tray in a warm and sunny spot, like a windowsill, and water generously.
- Ensure that the compost is always moist but try not to over-water. Be patient and enjoy watching your very own seeds germinate and flourish. As they grow you will need to consider separating the plants into larger pots or even planting outside in the ground.

\*Not all vegetables have mature seeds in them and so will not produce plants. You are more likely to have success with things like tomatoes, strawberries, apples, oranges, peppers, chillies or butternut squash.

\*\*The size of your tray and how many seeds you have saved will determine how many toilet roll tubes you will need. You need between 3 and 5 seeds in each tube and for the base of the tubes to be in contact with the base of the tray.



## You will need:

- Seeds saved from fruit or veg
- Scrap paper (you can recycle used envelopes)
- A pen
- Scissors
- Empty toilet roll tubes
- A plastic tray (you can recycle food trays)
- Gardening gloves
- Compost or soil
- Wooden lollipop sticks
- A watering can (or a recycled milk carton with holes poked into the lid)

# Handmade Seed Paper

Being creative and giving to others helps us to feel good.

By making and giving your own seed paper you can not only give a personalised, handmade gift to friend or loved one, but also do your bit for the planet.

Recycling paper that would otherwise go in the bin and encouraging the planting of seeds that increase the biodiversity of an area, are incredibly valuable ways to show your compassion for others and the environment.

## Method:

- Tear up your scrap paper into small pieces, about the size of your small fingernail and put it in the plastic bottle. You don't need much, equivalent to an A4 sheet will do.
- Add some warm water, to about one quarter full, and then shake. You need to keep shaking until a paper pulp is formed. You might need to leave it to soak and go back to it later.
- While you're waiting for the paper to soak you can draw some shapes onto an old t-shirt or sheet of parchment paper. Keep the shapes simple and try to make them about the size of your hand.
- Pour the paper pulp into a mixing bowl and add some decorative petals and leaves, even dandelion and daisy petals add a lovely splash of colour and detail. Then add a sprinkle of seeds and mix gently.
- Now for the messy bit! Take a handful of the paper pulp mixture and splatter it onto your drawn shapes, manipulating it into the desired shape with your fingers.
- Leave to dry on a windowsill or near to a radiator.
- Once dry you can stick the shape to a hand made card and write a message for a special friend. It's also a good idea to highlight that it is seed paper and that it can be planted in a pot or the ground.



## You will need:

- Scrap paper (you can recycle used envelopes)
- A plastic bottle (you can recycle a soft drinks container)
- Warm water
- A mixing bowl
- A packet of wildflower/herb seeds (or you could use some of your saved seeds from the 'Plants from Pips' activity)
- Some decorative leaves and petals
- An old t-shirt or parchment paper
- A felt tip pen
- A sheet of coloured A5 card
- Glue
- Food colouring (optional)