Winter ice art

Look for natural objects such as acorn cups, pine needles and cones. When you get home visit: www.forestry.gov.uk/westonbirt-seasonalplay to explain how to create winter ice art for your garden.

This activity involves putting objects into water in a cup or saucer or shallow container with a piece of string. Put in the freezer, when frozen, remove from container and hang up outside.

more family fun

www.forestry.gov.uk/westonbirt-families

www.naturedetectives.org.uk

Booklet by Shaun Nixon, Chris Meakin and Lauren McIntyre
images: iStockphoto vladm, hyside, arsenik, eyecrave, aleroyt, bradleyrn, cimmerian. WTPL Pete Holmes, Adrian Yeo, John McKinlay, Fran Hitchinson, Maurice Walker, Kim Yarwood, Nicholas Spurling. Karen Letten, Roy Batell, Eric Mahy
Illustrations by Michelle Davies

Forestry Commission England

WOODLAND TRUST

playing through the seasons

winter

WESTONBIRT THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM

Woodland Trust nature detectives

Waiting to meet you

There is a special tree in every woodland just waiting to meet you!

Find a thin stick and some wet mud. Use the stick to trace with mud the 2, 3 or 4 main lines on your palm (alternatively use a pen to mark these lines clearly).

Look carefully at this pattern, for the special tree you need to find will have this pattern too.

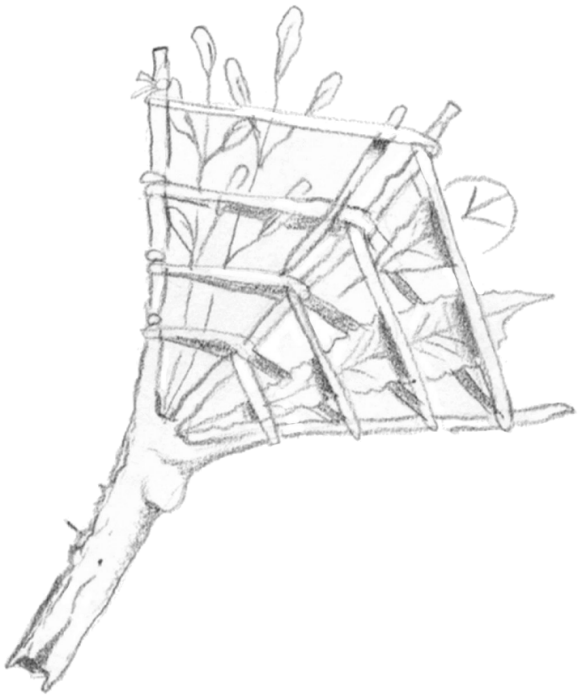
Look for it in the big branches, in the tiny twigs or in the bark. Some of you may have further to explore than others but your tree will be there, waiting.

Stick weaving

You will need to bring some string or wool with you, or you could collect today and make at home.

Look for a forked stick on the woodland floor. Wind the wool or string in a zig-zag from one side of the fork to the other.

As you find natural objects like leaves and winged seeds, weave them in. Or you could find a bendy, flexible stick, make a loop and tie it together. Use the wool to make a framework and weave your objects into this.



Tree faces

Now that the leaves have fallen off our deciduous trees, their once hidden faces are easier to spot.

As you walk look for some faces in the trees.

A tree may have only one eye showing as it mischievously winks at you, it may have both eyes open wide, or you may only spot the nose and mouth of a sleeping tree.

You may be able to tell how the tree is feeling – the signs are there!

What have you spotted?

☐ fungus

bracket fungus or bright jelly fungus on dead branches

☐ buds

long ones, clusters, opposite pairs and big sticky ones!

☐ poo

shiny oval-shaped droppings from roe deer

☐ nest

can you see an old bird's nest in the bare tree branches?

☐ drey

an untidy, twiggy squirrel nest about the size of a football

☐ nuts

can you see any squirrels or jays looking for their stores?

☐ moss

cushion moss in beech woods under oaks or conifers

☐ birds

look for food - red berries on hawthorn, dog rose and holly

☐ mistletoe

balls of mistletoe growing in the tree tops

☐ noise

woodpeckers drumming

☐ catkins

hazel catkins in February

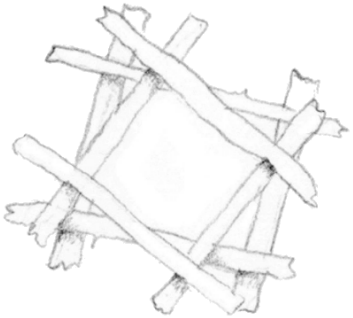
☐ people

Woodland Trust
naturedetectives

Twig towers

Environmental artists such as Andy Goldsworthy and Chris Drury use natural woodland materials to build and create 3D art and sculpture in the woods.
Why not build your own twig tower sculpture under a tree...?

Gather some twigs, ready to create your twig tower. It could have a square base, a triangular base or be of your own design.



The best place to build the tower would be <u>beneath a tree</u> as you can try to build the tower up to the lower branches.

If there's a very low branch then you could build around it so that the branch becomes part of your sculpture.

You could also use a tree trunk as support.

Winter scavenger hunt

How many of these winter treasures can you find? Whatever is growing on a tree (such as leaves, branches, flowers and seeds), the tree still needs it. Please collect only from the woodland floor.

- Spiky, shiny holly leaves
- Long tickly pine needles
- Tough, smooth leaves of an evergreen plant such as box
- Smooth bark of a cherry tree, with its horizontal stripes
- Bumpy, jigsaw pattern bark of a Scots pine
- Rough oak bark with its deep vertical cracks
- A green cone still to ripen on the tree (please leave it there)
- A ripe cone with open bracts
- A cone shorter than your thumb
- Seed catkins on birch trees
- A leaf skeleton
- A twig with two or three different species of lichen

Winter homes

Only three of our British mammals hibernate:

hedgehogs, dormice and bats.

Whilst they sleep their body temperature needs to stay cool so they don't waste energy trying to keep warm.

The rest of our mammals, however, need to have a warm, cosy shelter to snuggle up in during the cold winter weather. What sort of shelter would you build for a wood mouse or bank vole? How can you make the home as cosy as possible? Look for materials around you, find a suitable place and build away!

Blindfold tree exploring

This is a fun and interesting way to explore trees. Bring something you can use as a blindfold with you such as a scarf. Choose someone to lead, and someone to wear the blindfold.

Look for a tree that is safe to reach (no burrows or roots to trip over). The lowest branches must be above the height of the person.

Carefully lead your friend to the tree, avoiding obstacles and holes. Before they can stretch out and reach the tree tell them to STOP. Tell them to reach out their arms, and take tiny steps forwards until they reach the tree (you may need to help guide their hands).

Ask your friend to feel the texture of the bark, smell it, and try to hug the tree. Lead you friend back, gently turn them around a few times so they will find it difficult to know which way they were taken and then ask them to take the blindfold off. Can they find the tree you took them to? Does it feel and smell the same?

Now its your turn!

Lie detector

As you walk through the woods look for interesting natural objects. Now describe what it is to a friend, only you must lie! You cannot say what it really is. You'll be surprised at the amazing things you'll come across!

"The last time I was walking in the wood, I found the sail from an ant's windsurfer that had fluttered down during the invertebrates tree top windsurfing competition."

"A little further on I found a lucky claw from a woodland oak dragon. They occasionally lose one during their energetic winter woodland ball, dancing all night in the moonlight. Fortunately for them a new one soon grows back."

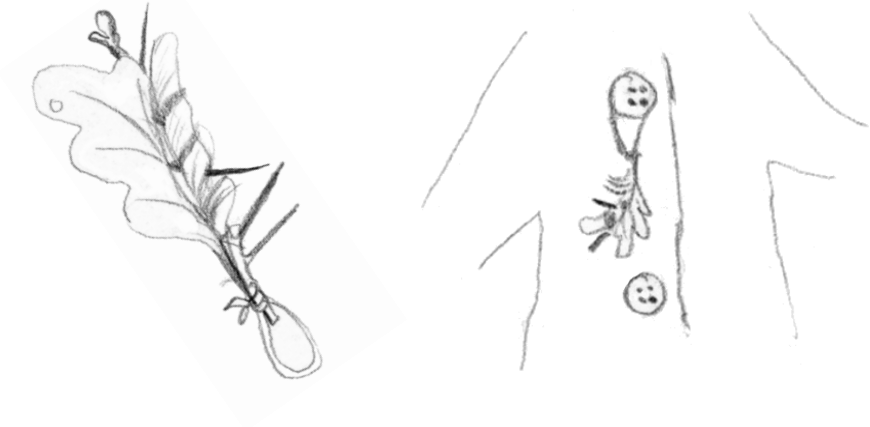
Winter badges

All you need to bring from home is a small length of thread.

Stop at a special place on your walk and look around for any fallen natural objects that catch your attention.

Maybe they have an interesting shape, colour, texture or pattern.

Gather the objects together, binding with the thread.

Make a loop so that you can attach to a coat button, wear it in your hair or as a winter woodland medal around your neck.

When you leave the woodland, you will be able to take your memories of that special place with you.