

Trees through the seasons



Ages: 5+



Time: 45 minutes-1 hour
several times over a year

Purpose:

To gain a deeper appreciation for nature and its rhythms through the seasons.

Youth work outcomes:

Outcome 3: Young people create, describe and apply their learning and skills

Outcome 7: Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking

Sustainable development goals:



Materials:

Drawing materials, clipboards, green space with trees

Context:

In our hectic everyday lives, there's little time to stop and appreciate nature. We rush from place to place, activity to activity and we don't notice the slow and steady rhythms of what's around us. The UK is experiencing biodiversity loss at an unprecedented rate, with [almost half](#) of our natural biodiversity being lost since the industrial revolution, putting us in the [bottom 10%](#) of nations for biodiversity intactness. But because most people don't stop to notice the changes, these losses go unacknowledged. By slowing down and spending deliberate time in nature, young people get huge mental health benefits. [Research shows](#) that spending time outdoors and in nature can reduce feelings of stress and anger, improve confidence and self-esteem, and improve physical health as well. Spending time in nature also allows young people to appreciate the details and learn about what's around them. Even in the city, there is a rich biodiversity all around us, from insects to birds to trees. This simple, long term project will help young people appreciate the rhythms of nature and the small wonders of biodiversity in their local area.

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What to do:

Take the young people to a nearby green space with plenty of trees (if there is one handy for you – if not, a tree on the street or in a garden will do). Ask the young people to choose a tree to study. Encourage them to get up close and personal with the tree:

- What does the bark feel like?
- Are there any leaves? Feel the texture of them and note the colours.
- Use all your senses. What does the tree smell like?
- What type of tree is it?
- How old do you think it is?
- Are there any seeds or fruits?
- What animals, insects or birds can you spot in and around the tree?

Allow the young people to take their time getting to know the tree. Give them drawing materials and get them to draw the tree, recording shapes, colours, textures, and any wildlife around the tree. The young people can build on these sketches when they get back indoors as well, getting creative with materials.

Come back to the same tree at different times of year. What changes about the tree during the different seasons? Are there any differences in the types of animals you can see around the tree? Encourage the young people to record all these details and create an artwork for each season, reflecting on the rhythms of nature and the beauty of the things around them.

Glossary:

- Biodiversity = the huge variety of plants, animals and other organisms that make up an ecosystem.
- Biodiversity loss = the loss, through extinction or displacement, of different species of plants, animals and other organisms, caused by the destruction of their habitats (the places they live) and changes in the weather systems due to climate change that make their homes uninhabitable for them.