

Nature in Mind

Fun, nature-based activities to
stimulate and engage the mind



Introduction

Nature in Mind

project

Fun, nature-based activities to stimulate and engage the mind

This pilot project was developed in order to bring nature to older people who may no longer be able to get outdoors. The aim has been to deliver nature-related activities indoors, in order to engage and stimulate people, whilst keeping them feeling like they're in contact with the natural world.

These activities have been tried and tested with many older people in various setting such as care homes, day centres and clubs. They have also been delivered at groups run by Age UK Alzheimer's Society and the Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust. Many participants have been suffering from Dementia or other mental health problems, and/or physical and sensory difficulties.

This activity booklet

This booklet has been designed for anyone looking for ideas for nature activities, either for themselves, or as a carer, care worker or group organiser. They can be adapted or modified accordingly and although have been delivered with older adults, they can be used with any age group. They can be delivered on a one-to-one or group basis.

The following two evidence-based concepts have been considered in the design of the activities:

Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST)
CST is an evidenced-based treatment for people with mild to moderate Dementia and is a UK Government NICE guidelines recommended intervention, which involve running activities in a group. The 18 key principles of cognitive stimulation therapy are:

- 1) mental stimulation
- 2) new ideas, thoughts and associations
- 3) using orientation sensitively and implicitly
- 4) opinions rather than facts
- 5) using reminiscence
- 6) providing triggers to aid recall and concentration
- 7) continuity and consistency between sessions
- 8) implicit (rather than explicit) learning
- 9) stimulating language
- 10) stimulating executive functioning
- 11) person-centred
- 12) respect
- 13) involvement
- 14) inclusion
- 15) choice
- 16) fun
- 17) maximising potential
- 18) building and strengthening relationships

Five ways to wellbeing

The new economics foundation (nef) gathered evidence to show that building the following five actions into day to day life will help improve your wellbeing:

- CONNECT – be in contact and talk with others
KEEP LEARNING – try something new or learn a new skill
GIVE – do something for someone else
TAKE NOTICE – look around, be aware of your environment
BE ACTIVE – do some exercise, step outside, move about.

At the top of each activity will be a list of the CST principles and the 'Ways to Wellbeing' actions that can be included by running that particular activity.

The benefits of health and wellbeing, by being in contact with nature and the natural world, are something many of us instinctively know or have experienced. The new economics foundation publication 'Natural Solutions' (2012) discusses the many benefits of being in contact with nature on mental and physical health. MIND, the mental health charity, in 'Ecotherapy The Green Agenda for Mental Health' (2007) highlights evidence to support a wide range of benefits to our mental health through having contact with the natural world.

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)

The Conservation Volunteers help hundreds of thousands of people each year to reclaim their local green places. Over the last 53 years, we have inspired and empowered people to cultivate a new future for their neighbourhoods and green places.

We unite people to transform and nurture their precious open places. We provide funding, practical support and advice to volunteers throughout the UK to inspire all sections of the community to join in and feel good. Through our environmental projects, we inspire people all across the UK to reclaim their local environments. (www.tcv.org.uk/greengym)

Contents

General advice for the activities

- It is possible to use old pallets for the woodwork activities that you can often pick up at wood suppliers or supermarkets for free (it is necessary to double up the pallet planks for adequate thickness for bird boxes).
- Check with your local wood suppliers to see if they have any free off-cuts, or will cut your wood to size for you.
- Use peat-free compost for planting, to help look after the environment.

Health and safety advice

- Use gloves for sanding wood to protect from splinters – do not sand if you suffer with breathing problems.
- Wear gauntlet gloves if using a handsaw and gardening gloves for planting.
- Bulbs, berries and some foliage can be toxic if eaten or can cause skin irritation so wear gloves when planting.
- Owl pellets can carry disease so be really careful – use gloves, aprons, long tweezers and soak before use in sterilising liquid, to avoid toxic dust problems.
- Wear plastic disposable gloves and aprons for messy activities and wash hands thoroughly after all activities or use cleaning gel.
- When using paints and/or solvents please ensure adequate ventilation and take regular breaks if necessary.

List of activities

	PAGE
JANUARY Bird box making	4
FEBRUARY Wildlife bingo and quiz	5
MARCH Sunflower-growing competition	6
APRIL Herb/salad box making and planting	7
MAY Making minibeast and solitary bee homes	8
JUNE Making a flower press and flower craft	9
JULY Mystery nature box game	10
AUGUST Plant pot decoration	11
SEPTEMBER Bird feeder making	12
OCTOBER Indoor bulb planting	13
NOVEMBER Leaf rubbings art and leaf game	14
DECEMBER Christmas Wreath and glitter cone making	15
Bonus activity Owl pellet dissection	16

Bird box making

A very popular activity that can give people years of enjoyment – a great help for nesting birds too!



To make from scratch you will need

Untreated wood (a plank 150mm wide, 1000mm in length and at least 17mm thick), wood saw, panel pins (thin nails), waterproof felt (or a strip of cycle tyre) for the hinge and hammers.

Making

- Make a round front opening for tits and nuthatches (hole 30-35mm diameter), or an open fronted one for robins and spotted flycatchers (cut the front panel in half)

- Cut the wood as per diagram and nail together with panel pins to prevent wood from splitting.

Putting up your nest box

- Put them up in February for spring nesting.

- Make sure it is sheltered from prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight.

- Site small hole nest boxes 1-3m above ground on trees or shed walls.

- Hide open fronted nest boxes in sites with good vegetation cover.

- If at all possible, site box where it is observable, maybe from a lounge window for maximum enjoyment.

Tie it in to national nest box week (see the BTO British Trust for Ornithology website for details). Invite someone from the RSPB Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to come and talk to your group about birds.



“very good and nice to have a giggle while we work!”

Patricia, 76 years
Participant

HANDY HINTS

You can assemble boxes using nails or screws depending on the abilities of the group. Either way it can be helpful to pre-drill the holes to make it easier

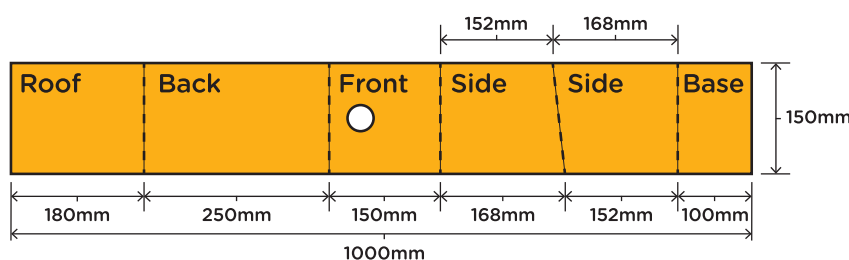
You can buy pre-prepared kits from the Hawk and Owl Trust's Sculthorpe Moor Nature Reserve at a very reasonable cost, with all the holes already drilled in and just ready to screw together with no hammering needed

Ongoing engagement

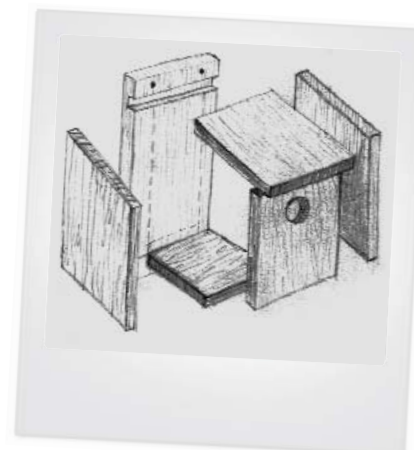
Encouraging people to monitor any activity in and around the nest boxes.

If you have some extra money, why not buy a bird box with a nest camera and have a small TV screen indoors to watch any nesting activity.

Scale:
1 Inch = 25.4 mm



- Use a strip of the felt or tyre to make a hinge for the lid. Tack this on to prevent water getting into the box



Wildlife bingo and quiz

A cheap and simple idea that can be adapted for different groups

You will need

Pictures of common British garden nature (e.g. birds, mammals, trees, flowers, insects), card, glue, laminating sheets and laminator (not essential but helpful), non-permanent marker pens, small prizes and quiz questions.

Making

- Print from the internet a large selection of pictures of nature and cut to sizes (around 6x6cm), or bigger if needed (observe copyright rules).

- Stick 6-10 different pictures onto each piece of card and laminate.

- Make up however many cards you need, making sure there are none with the same combination of pictures on.

- Print off big versions of the pictures on A4 paper ('landscape' orientation).

Playing the game

- Give each participant a bingo card.

- Hold up the bigger pictures one by one and get people to tick off on their card if they have the matching picture (or cover up the matching picture with a square of paper).

- The participant who matches all their pictures first is the winner and gets a prize.

Ideas for during the activity

- Generate discussion on wildlife, allowing people to talk about their ideas and opinions. Talk about topical issues such as badger culling, deer culling, fox numbers increasing etc.

- Use reminiscence by discussing how things used to be in rural life compared to now.

“it was very good for socialising, all our residents were really interested”

Carina
Care Home Manager



HANDY HINTS

Add in a nature quiz!

To spice up the game a bit you can ask quiz questions relating to the pictures. For example:
What species of bird is this?
What species of deer is this?
(Please refer to Appendix 1 for more nature questions)

Get people to work in teams or pairs and help each other



Sunflower-growing competition



A fun way to keep connected with the outdoors

You will need

Compost, small pots, labels, sunflower seeds that grow very tall (e.g. American Giant variety).

Planting

Fill a small pot with compost and plant inside one or two seeds. Label with participant's name or a fun name of their choice. Grow indoors March-May, then plant outdoors April-May, **after frosts**. They should flower July-October.

Competition

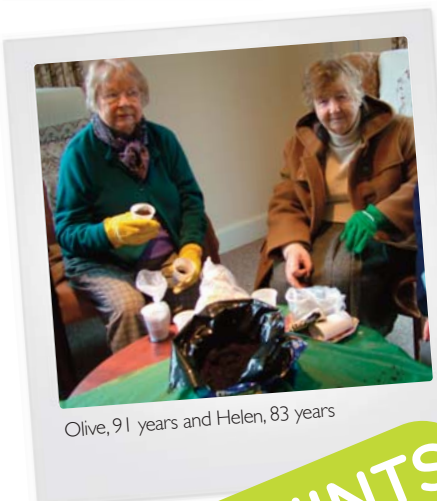
Ask the individual to take responsibility for nurturing and growing. Alternatively keep the pots together and one person waters them and then transplants them into a communal garden or pots on a patio. Keep the name of the person who planted the seeds beside the flower. The winner is the one who grows the tallest sunflower!

Ideas for during the activity

Plant other types of dwarf sunflowers (e.g. Firecracker) in pots or the garden, or give them to relatives or friends. Show pictures of sunflowers and bring some sunflower seeds for tasting. Use the gardening reminiscence kit from the library.

Ongoing engagement

Grow them where they can be seen, maybe from a lounge window. If possible allocate an individual to water them and measure them each week. At the end of the summer let the birds enjoy the seeds or use them for the bird feeder activity (September).



HANDY HINTS

Seeds needs may vary

Lots of seeds, both flowers and vegetables, can be planted indoors at this time of year in small pots and then planted outside after the frosts have finished

Talk to your local garden centre for other planting ideas

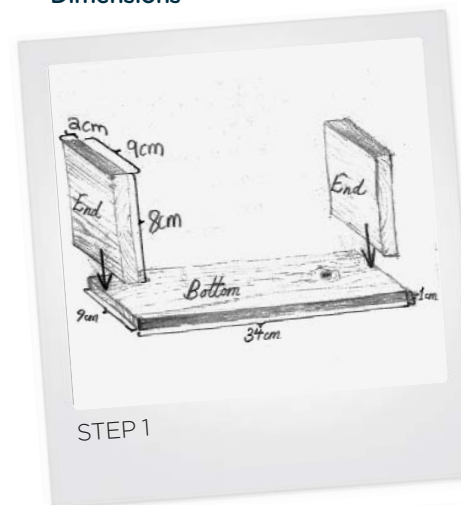
Windowsill herb/salad box making and planting

The wooden box can be made quite easily so don't be put off doing this bit!

You will need

Wood (pine or pallets), saw, nails, hammers, waterproof plastic sheeting for lining, sandpaper and gloves.

Dimensions



STEP 1



STEP 2

Assembling of the box

- Cut wood pieces to size and sand down any rough edges.
- Nail the two short end pieces to the bottom panel first, then nail on the two side panels.
- Cut some waterproof plastic to line the box, to protect the wood.



Geoffrey, 81 years

You will need for the planting

Compost, herb/salad seeds, small plastic plant pots and gloves.

Herbs types: coriander, parsley, basil, sage, thyme, chives.

Salad seeds: pack choi, lambs lettuce, spinach beet.

Planting

Fill pots with compost, sprinkle seeds onto surface and cover with a thin layer of compost. Water sparingly. Alternatively you can sow directly into the lined box.

Ideas for during the activity:

- Sanding down the edges of the panels is a good job for some who may not wish to do the hammering – get some people planting while others construct.
- Get people working together – one hammering the other holding.
- Some people may prefer to decorate and plant up ready-made boxes so it can be good to have some you made earlier!
- Buy some fresh herbs and do a tasting and smelling session with participants and encourage a discussion of herbs, food and cooking.



“the activity promoted dexterity, thinking, use of imagination and most importantly generated friendship through communication and helping each other”

Ann (76 years)
Age UK Volunteer

HANDY HINTS

Ongoing engagement

Watch the growing of herbs then eat and enjoy!

Get people involved in the care and watering of the seeds/plants and use in cooking

Decorating the box (optional)

Paint pens suitable for using on wood (e.g. uni POSCA pens), stickers etc can be used to personalise the boxes

Making minibeast and solitary bee homes

Simple solitary bee homes

Help our bees with this easy activity!

There are 240 types of solitary bees and they lay their eggs in small spaces called cells that they make in places like these bamboo cane homes. They do not sting and are great pollinators of fruit bushes and trees. Other bees such as Leafcutter Bee and Mason Bee may use the bamboo too.

You will need

Hollow garden bamboo canes, small saw, gloves, skewer and garden twine.



Derek, 79 years



The deluxe minibeast home!

This deluxe home for all sorts of insects and beasts needs to be built outside - a great activity for a summer day in a courtyard or garden.

Suggestions for packaging

Pallets, sticks, broken tiles and bricks, moss, straw, bamboo canes and rocks - anything that would be good for nooks and crannies for minibeasts.

Making

- Stack around six pallets on top of each other in an outside garden or patio area, making sure they are stable and secure.
- Fill in the gaps of the pallets with your chosen packing materials - remembering to put the heaviest items at the bottom. There is no wrong way of doing this, so just have fun!

Ongoing engagement

Encourage people to monitor any minibeast activity in the hotel. It may be used for hibernation in the winter months (eg over wintering butterflies) and breeding in the summer.

HANDY HINTS

Ideas for during the activity

Show pictures of solitary bees and minibeasts such as ladybirds, lacewing beetles and centipedes so people know what creatures may take up residence.

Discuss which beasts people remember from their childhood compared to what we see nowadays

Avoid leaving large gaps, pack your minibeast home as tightly as possible



Making a simple flower press and flower craft

A lovely spring activity when the wild flowers are out.
This is really easy to do so don't be put off by the drill!

You will need

Drill, 2 x pieces of wood at least 1½ inch thick (ply or chipboard but any wood would do), wood saw, tape measure, gloves, cardboard (you can use cardboard boxes), kitchen roll, 4 bolts with wing nuts (per press) and flowers to press.

Making

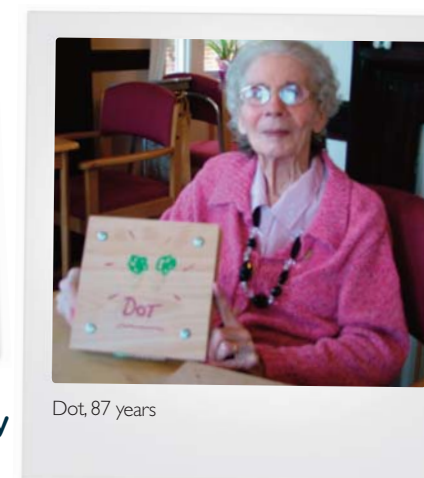
- Cut the wood into squares (both of equal size), a good size to use would be 20x20 cms.
- Drill a hole in each of the four corners of the wood for the bolts to go into.

Assembly

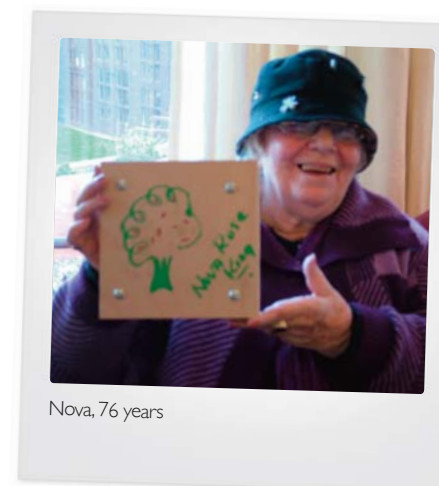
- Cut the cardboard and kitchen roll to the same size as the wood squares and cut the corners off.
- Lay your flowers between two pieces of kitchen paper then sandwich between two pieces of corrugated cardboard.
- Add the wood on each side, insert the screws and tighten using the wing nuts.
- Decorate the front of your flower press with paints or POSCA pens.
- Leave to press for at least 4 weeks, longer is fine.

Ideas for during the activity

Discuss flowers in relation to the seasons and have a wild flower session! Use flowers and an identification guide, or even have a flower quiz!



Dot, 87 years



Nova, 76 years

"a creative and easy activity to do and nice to see the residents engaging and talking to other residents about their interest in flowers."

Tina
Activity Coordinator



HANDY HINTS

Flower craft

Choose small flowers or leaves to press

Use these to make greetings cards and pictures

Laminate to use as placemats

Preparation of the wood

This bit can be done before running the activity if you did not want to use saws or drills during the activity

Mystery box nature game

A quick and easy game to prepare

You will need

Large cardboard box, scissors and various natural or nature related objects, e.g. pine cone, conker, flower bulb, packet of seeds, trowel, shells, stones, feathers, hazelnut, leaves etc.

Making the game

- Cut a hole in the side of the box large enough for an arm to go through.
- Place nature items inside and seal the lid.



Playing the game

Players take it in turns to put their hand in and find one object. Get the individual to guess what it is by the feel of it or shake it to see if there is sound, etc.

Alternatively if the individual knows what it is, then get them to describe the object to the other players and have them guess. Remember, get them to describe it without saying its name. Use the objects to promote discussion and reminiscence.

“a really fun way to get people using their sense of touch and powers of description to tell others what’s in the box! It gets people to concentrate and focus on language. A really enjoyable, social activity”

Lucy
Volunteer Helper



Nora, 88 years

HANDY HINTS

Play in two teams with a box each and see which team guesses all of the objects first

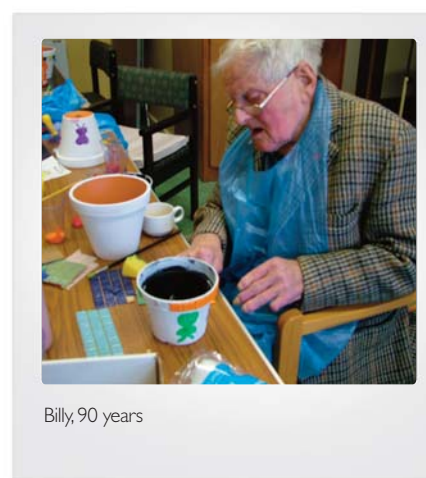
You could use the Norfolk Library 'Wildlife' reminiscence kit alongside to prompt discussion points

Plant pot decoration

Cheer up the windowsill or garden with colourful plant pots

You will need

Terracotta plant pots of various sizes, white emulsion paint, paintbrushes (large and smaller ones), poster paints, card to make stencils (optional), scissors, washing up sponges, mosaic/glass squares (optional), and PVA glue.



Billy, 90 years

“loved it and enjoyed making something”

May, 89 years

Making

- Paint the outside of the pots with white emulsion (2 coats) and allow to dry.
- Decorate with coloured paints of your choice either using a small brush or cut out stencils of nature shapes (e.g. flower, butterfly, etc). Use a washing up sponge to dap paint on over the stencil. Alternatively you can decorate them by gluing small mosaic pieces around the pot.
- Allow drying and then seal using watered down PVA glue for indoor use. If going outdoors then make sure you seal them with a good waterproof sealant.

“the activities required people to think, make choices and interact with each other, as well as pushing themselves despite their physical or mental challenges”

Anne
Volunteer Helper

Ongoing engagement

- Plant favourite plants indoors or outdoors and watch them flower – give them to friends or relatives.

Stone decoration

Decorate big flat stones found from the beach or riverbed in the same way and use as paperweights or for decoration.



Patricia, 76 years, Lucy (volunteer) and Stella, 86 years

HANDY HINTS

If running this activity with a group, pre paint some pots white, having allowed them to dry at an earlier time – they will now be ready to decorate. This allows people to get on straight away with the finer decoration without having to wait for the white undercoat to dry. Some people enjoy the painting white and others prefer adding the finer detail!



Making bird feeders

Keep the birds well fed during the winter with these two fun and easy alternatives to buying readymade feeders

Apple bird feeders Pinecone feeders

You will need

Apples, sunflower seeds, apple corer and strong garden twine.

Making

- Core apples and tie the twine through the hole leaving enough to hang the apple up with.
- Take sunflower seeds and stick into apple (like a pincushion) – cover the apple in seeds.
- Hang outside for the birds to enjoy – don't worry if the apple falls to the ground, the birds will still enjoy eating it. Some species prefer feeding from the ground, such as blackbirds and thrushes.

You will need

Pinecones (large and open is best), lard, birdseed, tray, strong garden twine and disposable plastic gloves.

Making

- Attach twine securely to the cone to hang it up with.
- Rub lard over all of the cone making sure to push it into the gaps of the cone.
- Roll the cone covered in lard in the tray of mixed bird seeds and hang outside.

Ideas for during the activity

Play a bird song CD or DVD for sound and visual stimulation. Show pictures of common birds and have bird magazines or books to hand. Engage participants in discussion about their favourite birds, bird activity etc. Give people the choice of which bird feeder to make.

Ongoing engagement

- Hang the feeders where they can be watched by residents – outside the lounge or bedroom and continue to report back and discuss birds seen.
- Have a simple laminated bird identification chart stuck on the wall by the window with a pen and tick when seen.
- Encourage people to make these again with grandchildren or other relatives and give as presents to others.

“I enjoyed it lots and I have learnt something I didn't know about birds”

Pat, 87 years



Elsie, 96 years and Margaret, 89 years



Cecil, 89 years

HANDY HINTS

Warm the lard on a radiator and provide plastic gloves as very sticky!

Pushing the seeds into the apple requires good grip and strength in hands so may not be suitable for everyone

You can hire a birdsong CD or DVD from the local library

Indoor bulb planting (for Christmas flowering)

Planting bulbs and enjoying them flower stimulates a wealth of people's past experience and knowledge

You will need

Pots, bulbs, bulb compost, gloves and a trowel. Types of bulbs suitable for growing inside for Christmas flowering include 'prepared' Hyacinth bulbs and Narcissi (e.g. Paperwhite, Grand Soliel d'Or).

Planting

- Plant Hyacinth bulbs in pot, making sure tip of bulb is sticking up above the compost.
- Plant Narcissus bulbs deeper into compost about twice the depth of the bulb.
- Keep in cold dark place for a few weeks (e.g. shed or cupboard), keeping the compost moist until a green shoot appears about 2 inches high.
- Then bring into a warm, light environment (e.g. windowsill) and enjoy the growing and flowering! Do not over water.

Other ideas for during the activity

- Other bulbs can be planted indoors and grown on windowsills such as Crocuses, Snowdrops, Tulips, Lilies and Amaryllis. Planting outdoor bulbs in pots can be done inside too and transferred outside – e.g. Snowdrops, Crocuses, Tulips etc in February for spring flowering.
- Show pictures of what the plants look like in flower and allow individuals to have a choice of which bulbs are used.

Ongoing engagement aspect

- Take responsibility for watering, watch growing, enjoy flowering (smell and sight of flowers).
- After the indoor bulbs have flowered, plant them in the garden for flowering next spring.

“all those who took part appeared to really enjoy it – there was bright, alert expressions on their faces”

Ellie
Care Home Manager



Kashia, 87 years

“first class enjoyment!”

Janet



HANDY HINTS

Use the Norfolk Library gardening reminiscence kit alongside the planting activity to generate discussion on gardening, seasons

Encourage participants to plant pots for other people such as relatives, grandchildren and other residents

Promote people helping each other during the activity

Leaf rubbing art and leaf game

A cheap and easy activity, which can engage a range of people

You will need

A good variety of leaves (pressed flat in a large book or between pieces of wood), wax crayons, paper or card and laminator (optional).

Rubbing

- Lay the leaves down on a piece of white paper with the underside (most pronounced veins) facing upwards.
- Cover with a piece of thin white paper.
- Using wax crayons on their side (Scola Chubbi Stumps crayons are good), rub over the leaves until the imprint rubs through.

Ideas for during the activity

Encourage people to touch the leaves and feel the texture and veins or create pictures for others.

Leaf game

Collect and laminate a variety of tree leaves. Pass them around asking people to identify which tree they are from and talk about trees.

Give clues to help, e.g. this tree produces acorns, this tree has bark which is good for starting fires etc.

Generate discussion about trees such as people's favourite trees, what they like about trees. Bring in topical issues such as Ash dieback disease or refer to things such as Dutch Elm disease - what do people think about these issues. Talk about native or non-native trees, difference between evergreens and deciduous trees, what to look for on trees in each season.



Kashia, 87 years



Amy, 76 years

HANDY HINTS

Make a leaf collage by gluing the leaves to the paper and laminate or frame your pictures

Discuss what is happening now outside to the trees to help connect people to the seasons



"people like myself and my friends need these kind of activities in day centres like ours for stimulation to keep us active and also our minds active. Great fun!"

Mary, 63 years



Christmas Wreath making and glitter cones

Two great, simple activities for Christmas decorations

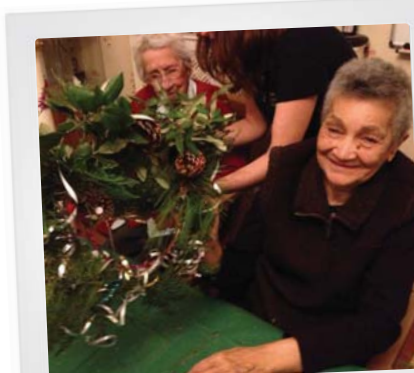
Wreath making

You will need

Evergreen foliage cut from trees such as Holm oak, pines, holly etc, coloured pipe cleaners, metal wreath ring (buy cheaply at florists), coloured sparkly ribbon or Christmas bows, scissors or pruning shears and gloves.

Making the wreath

Cut bits of foliage and attach to the wreath with pipe cleaners, continue with this until all of wreath is covered. Making little bunches first then attaching them seems to work well. Stick on bows and ribbons if desired.



Hilda, 89 years and Lucilla, 82 years

Glitter covered pinecones

You will need

Pine cones, PVA glue, glue brushes, glitter and coloured pipe cleaners.

Making

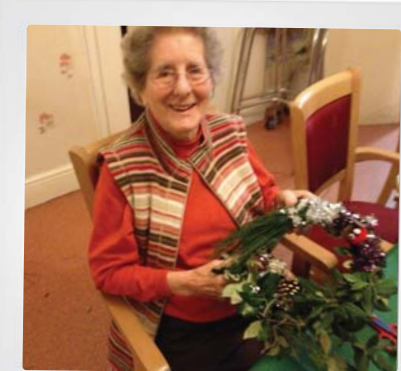
Tie a pipe cleaner around top of cone so you can attach to a Christmas tree, then dab glue on outside of the cone and roll in glitter.

Ideas for during the activity

Discuss Christmas, what it means to people, how it has changed. Use the variety of foliage to prompt a discussion of trees and seasons. Get people to work together on a wreath.

"very nice. Ive never done anything like that before"

Dot



Myra, 87 years

"these activities have helped our residents with Dementia reconnect with nature in a fun way and have added a whole new dimension to their activities programme"

Tina

Activity Coordinator

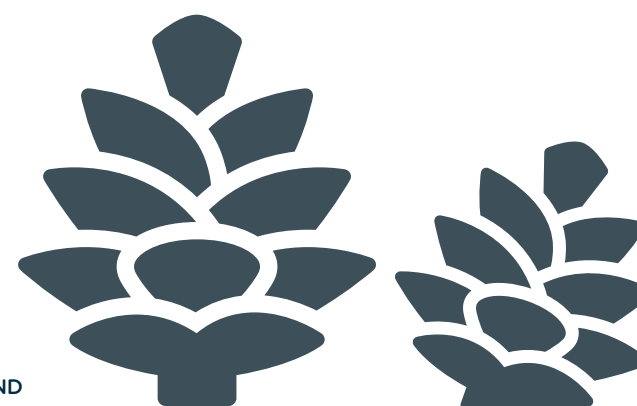
HANDY HINTS

Running the two activities together means that there is choice and a good variety of ways people can get involved

Reuse the metal wreaths for Easter wreaths or for next year. Give them to others as presents

Give the decorations to others as gifts for Christmas

Festive fun!



Owl pellet dissection

You are never too old to learn what owls eat for breakfast!

If you can get hold of some owl pellets then it is a fascinating activity to investigate what these birds of prey eat. Owls regurgitate what they cannot digest and sifting through these pellets can show some amazing remains such as skull and bones of a variety of small mammals.

- Use long tweezers or cocktail sticks.
- Make sure you have good magnifying glasses or screen as the bones are small and hard to see.
- The Field Studies Council (FSC) do great identification charts for owl pellet dissection.
- You can buy the pellets on the internet or approach your local nature reserve.



Nora, 89 years

“well, I’ve never done that before, what fun!”

Sheila



Sheila, 66 years

“I really enjoyed dissecting owl pellets with a group of elderly ladies who, within moments had gone from bemusement (and slight disgust!) at the idea to debating between them whether this particular pelvis had belonged to a Water Shrew or a Common Shrew.”

Lucy
Volunteer Helper

Remember!
keep a look out for pellets under barns or outhouses where owls roost.



Myria, 87 years, Nora, 91 years and Nora, 89 years

“the activity was very beneficial for my mum, it gives her a sense of purpose and keeps her brain active”

Pete
Relative of participant



Conclusion

The activities in the booklet have been well received by the participants, care staff and volunteers involved. Evidence has been gathered both qualitatively – through verbal feedback from participants and staff, and quantitatively through questionnaires – to show how engagement in these activities can be beneficial for the wellbeing of participants and those around them. Many who engaged in the activities reported an improvement in alertness, animation, dexterity and a sense of purpose. Staff and group leaders have observed this in many cases too.

Some common feedback from participants

- Good to contribute to the conservation of the environment.
- Something different to do and have learnt new things.
- Good to talk to people they may not normally talk to.
- They feel happier and have had fun.

Some common feedback from care staff, volunteers, group organisers

- People who do not usually join in activities have taken part and have revealed skills and interests their carers did not know they had.
- They have observed people who do not usually interact with each other working together within the activity and helping each other.
- It is a good opportunity for carers to engage with residents in a positive fun way which is not focused on daily care giving.

- Almost always people appear more alert and animated during and after the activity.
- There is an ongoing benefit for people with many of the activities such as watching for birds at feeders or enjoying watching things grow and flower.

Case examples

Fred: Fred, a resident in a care home, took part in the windowsill herb box making activity. He appeared to thoroughly enjoy the hammering and sanding and after the activity had finished he got up out of his wheel chair and took himself to the toilet. Care staff explained that he hadn't walked for two weeks and they felt it was a direct result of the stimulation of the activity that he had.

John: The wildlife bingo and quiz session in a day centre generated a really interesting discussion and debate from the participants on different opinions about badger culling and how life in the countryside has changed over the years. John, who had lived and worked in the countryside all his life, was able to share his wealth of knowledge and first hand experience on these issues with the others. People became animated and engaged, sharing their opinions and ideas.



Charles, 94 years

Final thoughts

For some people, the benefits could purely be in the moment of the activity and the positive feeling of being in a group working alongside others and having fun. For others, there is a longer lasting benefit. They can continue to engage with the product of the activity, such as caring for plants, watching and identifying birds on homemade feeders, or maybe teaching their new skills to the grandchildren. This project goes to show that people of any age can contribute to the conservation of the environment whilst having fun and improving their health, wellbeing and sense of purpose.



Useful links, references and thanks

Useful Links

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) shop and website www.tcv.org.uk seeds, bulbs trees plus lots more

Norfolk Library Service Reminiscence Kits www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries

Sculthorpe Moor Nature Reserve, Fakenham (Hawk and Owl Trust) www.hawkandowl.org 01328 856788

RSPB Royal Society for Protection of Birds www.rspb.org.uk

BTO: British Trust for Ornithology www.bto.org

Alzheimer's Society www.alzheimers.org.uk

Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust NSFT www.nsft.nhs.uk

Age UK North Norfolk www.ageuk.org.uk/northnorfolk

FSC Field Studies Council www.field-studies-council.org

Norfolk Wildlife Trust www.wildlifetrusts.org or www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk

References

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Brochure written by Fin Duncan, Nature in Mind Project Officer, TCV Norwich.

Illustrations by Sunitha Webster.

Brochure designed by Shorthose Russell Limited.

“these activities were ideal for our clients because they were simple to execute, yet in no way childish or patronising. Everyone appeared to enjoy participating – including staff and volunteers!”

Carolyn
Alzheimer's Society

Appendices

Appendix 1

1) Nature quiz questions

Is it the male or female holly bush that produces the red berries? (female); What colour are the flowers of cow parsley? (White); What flowers made Cromer famous? (Poppies); What colour is a female blackbird? (Brown); What famous Broadland bird makes a 'booming' call? (Bittern); What tree does lambstails grow on? (Hazel); What is the fruit of the bramble called? (Blackberries); What bird is also known as a 'Jenny'? (Wren); What's a bishy barnybee otherwise known as? (Ladybird); What are hoglets? (Baby hedgehogs); What is a swallowtail? (A butterfly); What is a chifffchaff? (A bird); Is the snowdrop native to England? (No).

Appendix 2

2) Key principles to be followed when delivering CST.

1) Mental stimulation – this is the first aim of CST, to get peoples minds active and engaged. 2) New ideas, thoughts and associations, the aim of CST is to encourage new thoughts ideas and associations. 3) Using orientation sensitively and implicitly – orientation is an important goal of CST but not to put people on the spot, orientation information should be written on the Reality Orientation board and referred to during discussions. Many activities can be linked to times of the year i.e. if the food session falls near Christmas you can refer to it as 'you tasted mince pies'.

4) Opinions rather than facts – if facts are focussed on, we run the risk of people being “wrong”. This is to be avoided, so concentrate on opinions, as these can never be wrong.

5) Using reminiscence – this is an excellent way for people to demonstrate their strength to recall the past and by using comparisons help bring people in to the here and now.

6) Providing triggers to aid recall and concentration – using the RO board and multi sensory techniques. People will find some senses more stimulating than others, so for this reason use a variety of sensory stimuli. Always have something to look at, touch or feel. It is important to have a focus for each session so for this reason, bring a related object of some sort, to hold people's attention.

7) Continuity and consistency between sessions – always running groups in the same room with familiar staff for each session, referring to the group name and singing the group song. This all supports memory and helps learning to take place.

8) Implicit (rather than explicit) learning – referring to preferences and things in common, factual information tends to emerge without putting people on the spot.

9) Stimulating language – these skills are exercised in 'naming people and objects' and 'categorising'.

10) Stimulating executive functioning – these skills involving planning and organising are stimulated in 'being creative' and 'categorising' sessions.

11) Person centred – see the person not the dementia. Acknowledge that everyone is unique, look at people's strengths, not areas of weakness.

12) Respect – everyone in the group deserves respect, never expose difficulties and help people retain dignity.

13) Involvement – if you as a leader are doing most of the talking “stop” and think about how you can get everyone involved.

14) Inclusion – watch out for people who appear isolated from the group possibly from a hearing problem. Have a staff member sit with them and ensure they have a hearing aid if necessary.

15) Choice – the programme is quite detailed to aid leaders but offer choice and go with the flow if people have ideas of their own on a particular topic.

16) Fun – group activities should be fun. If people say its like being 'back at school' and by that mean its hard work and serious, then something is going wrong. Maybe reflect on whether the group leader is taking on the role of “teacher” too readily. Enjoyment is the key word.

17) Maximising potential – don't overload or overwhelm people but give them time with information and giving just enough prompts to allow them to carry out the activity for themselves.

18) Building and strengthening relationships – the group is a marvellous, safe and comfortable environment for people to build relationships with each other and leaders, especially if leaders fully participate in activities and do not present themselves as the experts but as another person within the group.

