

Eco-Themed Learning Activities

Books, rhymes, songs and activities, all designed to engage little learners with environmentalism, climate change and sustainability.





Contents

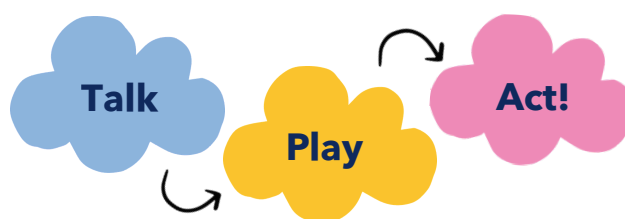
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Introduction

Introducing young children to complicated topics like environmentalism, climate change and sustainability can feel daunting. But don't worry - this resource has you covered!

We suggest that a great eco-learning experience includes 2 to 3 parts...



- **Talk** - a story, rhyme or song is great for introducing an environmental theme, sparking curiosity and discussion. This will help you to gauge your children's areas of interest and levels of understanding.
- **Play** - you might follow this up with a child-led activity, like art or role-play, that can help you to explore ideas with children creatively. This will deepen their engagement.
- **Act!** - finally, a hands-on eco-action, such as recycling, planting, or watering, can allow children to make an impact, address a problem, or model good eco-behaviours.

Of course, this approach is just a suggestion. You might, for example, merge steps 1 and 2 together. **Adapt our model and make it work for you and your children.**

This resource is a directory of tried and trusted provocations and activities.

- **Section 1** lists a series of books/flashcards, rhymes and songs, all linking to our key Eco-Schools themes.
- **Section 2** features Eco-Schools-designed projects, following the 'Talk-Play-Act' model. They are ready-go-go, full projects, including ideas and activity guides.
- **Section 3** lists a series of eco-friendly activities, projects, and resources. You can add these to your learning where you see fit, building upon children's interests in a hands-on, practical and fun way. Some are succinct one-off activities whilst others are more general concepts that can be adapted to become a regular feature of your learning. Themes overlap and we encourage you to take a more holistic approach.



**Books, flashcards,
songs, and rhymes**

Books / flashcards



ABC of Sustainability by Eco-Schools

One of our free resources, this ABC book is a great way to develop phonics and eco-knowledge together.



1-2-3 of Sustainability by Eco-Schools

Another free resource, accessible in Step 3: Eco-Learning. This simple book is a great way to start conversations and build basic numeracy.



Leave The Trees Please by Benjamin Zephaniah

Follow a little boy's friendship and journey with one tree in this powerful and beautiful love letter to nature.



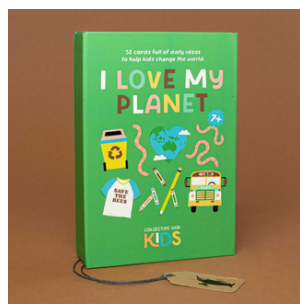
Meet the Weather by Caryl Hart

Get to know different types of weather in this engaging book, featuring bold illustrations by Bethan Woollvin.



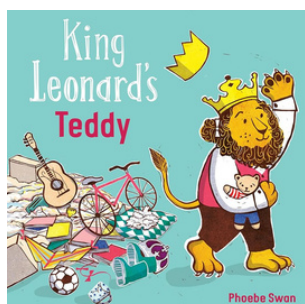
Let's Change the World: Zero Waste by Megan Anderson

From composting and recycling to growing produce, this book shows the many ways we can lead a waste-free lifestyle.



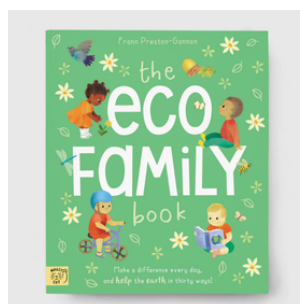
I Love My Planet Card Deck by Collective Hub

This brilliant set of flashcards features 52 ideas to help children make a positive impact on the world.



King Leonard's Teddy by Phoebe Swan

This lovely picture book explores the waste hierarchy through the tale of a lion king who learns the value of his possessions.



The Eco-Family by Frann Preston-Gannon

Follow six families throughout the day to discover everyday actions that help us live in a more eco-friendly way.

Books / flashcards



Sarah Roberts' 'Somebody...' series

These 3 thought-provoking and fun picture books explore the impact of our actions on the environment, told from the perspective of a discarded crisp packet, a confused plastic bag and a curious carbon atom.



Clean Up! by Nathan Bryon

Rocket's holiday to visit her grandparents in the Caribbean soon becomes an eco-mission as she sets out to tackle plastic pollution.



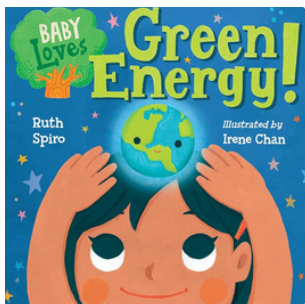
Worm Weather by Jean Taft

Children aren't the only ones that love splish-splashing in puddles! This charming tale shows how worms love wet weather just as much as kids do!



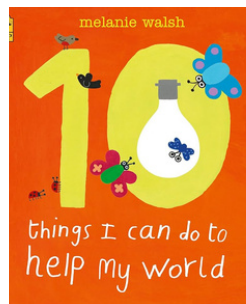
Greta Thunberg (Little People, Big Dreams) by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara

Greta Thunberg is featured in this inspiring series of life stories, highlighting her journey and impact.



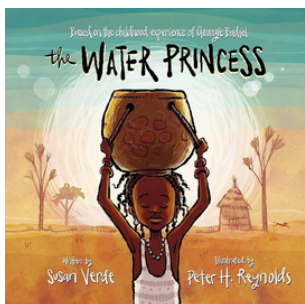
Baby Loves Green Energy by Ruth Spiro

Approved by children and scientists alike, this engaging book explores climate change and some of the ways that we can be eco-friendly.



10 Things I Can Do to Help My World by Melanie Walsh

This bold and beautiful picture book introduces ten simple steps that children can take to make a difference.



The Water Princess by Georgie Badiel

Inspired by the life of Burkina Faso-born model Georgie Badiel, this poignant story follows a young girl who dreams of bringing clean water to her community.



Here We Are by Oliver Jeffers

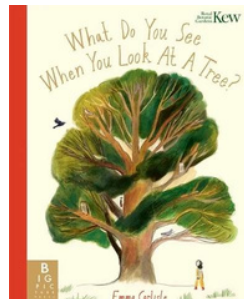
Packed with detail and warmth, this beautiful picture book inspires wonder and appreciation for our amazing planet.

Books / flashcards



The Leaf Thief by Alice Hemming

A humorous look at the passing of the seasons, children will love this playful picture book.



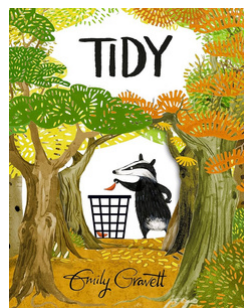
What Do You See When You Look at A Tree? by Emma Carlisle

This delicate story will inspire children to pause and appreciate nature, building a connection to the trees around us.



Change Starts with Us by Sophie Beer

This wonderful picture book celebrates small eco-actions that can make a big impact on the environment.



Tidy by Emily Gravett

Funny, yet subtle, this brilliant book follows Pete the badger and his attempts to keep his forest tidy.



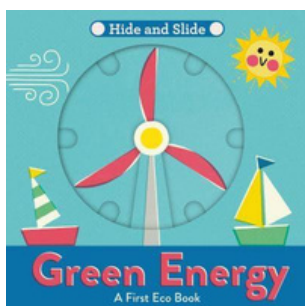
I Spot a Snail by Kay Vincent

Who better than the National Trust to introduce little learners to the critters and minibeasts that call our green spaces 'home'?



Bye, Car by Naomi Danis

This inquisitive story follows two children as they explore the impacts that travel can have on our environment.



Green Energy: A Hide and Slide First Eco-Book by Pintachan

With tabs to pull and slide, this book is a great introduction to renewable energy for tiny tots.



The Odd Fish by Naomi Jones

This playful portrait of plastic pollution will inspire children to recycle and protect our oceans.

Books / flashcards



The Blue Giant by Katie Cottle

In this story Meera and her mum are enjoying a trip to the beach, when a blue giant emerges from the ocean to ask for their help.



The Wild by Yuval Zommer

By bringing the Wild to life as a character, this story shows that our relationship with nature is one of mutual care and dependence.



Tiny Crab is a Tidy Crab by Paula Bowles

Proud of his beach home, Tiny Crab discovers the importance of speaking up when his friends fail to care for it.



What the Worm Saw by Emil Fortune

In this amusing tale, a very special worm introduces readers to the vital role worms play in keeping nature healthy.



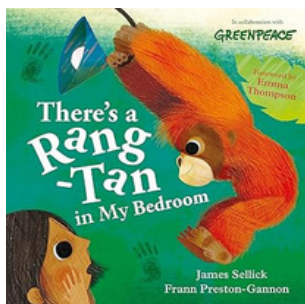
Wild by Katya Balen

When a little girl moves to the city, she misses the wilderness until she discovers that nature can be found in unexpected places.



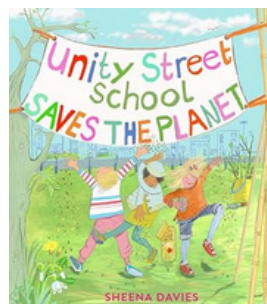
The Last Wolf by Mini Grey

A reimagining of Little Red Riding Hood in which Little Red discovers that there are very few wolves, and other wild animals, left in the forest.



There's a Rang-Tan in My Bedroom by James Sellick

In this powerful book, a little girl discovers a mischievous Rang-tan in her bedroom and learns the heartbreaking reason it can no longer live in the rainforest.



Unity Street School Saves the Planet by Sheena Davies

Unity Street School explores ways to care for our planet, making complex environmental issues accessible to young children.

Songs and Rhymes

If You're Happy and You Know It

This is a great song to adapt and present eco-actions in a positive way. At the end of each line, add an environmental action. For example, "If you're happy and you know it, plant a tree".

Old MacDonald Had a Farm

Get creative with this classic and add animal after animal after animal. Explore the world, from rainforests to jungles. Children will love how silly it gets but will learn about the amazing biodiversity from across our planet.

There's a Worm at the Bottom of the Garden

Celebrate the wiggly wonders that help keep our soil healthy and support plant growth.

Ten Plastic Bottles

Make this counting classic eco-themed and interactive by substituting 'green' bottles for 'plastic' ones. Collect ten plastic bottles, line them up, and after each one, knock it into the recycling bin. Follow up with a discussion about reducing plastic waste.

This is the way...

Another great song to adapt and present eco-actions in a positive way. Get creative and give this song an active travel theme...

"This is the way we ride our bikes... This is the way we scoot along... This is the way we take our steps... because we love our planet."

Oats, Peas, Beans, and Barley Grow

A longer nursery rhyme, ideal for older Early Years children, this classic rhyme breaks down the process of sowing, nurturing, and reaping produce.

Here is the Beehive

This nursery rhyme is a great way to introduce children to bees and the vital role they play in nature.

Five Little Speckled Frogs

This classic nursery rhyme contains a surprising amount of detail when unravelled, leading to discussions about pond habitats, the insects frogs eat, and simple food chains.



Eco-Schools 'Talk-Play-Act!' Projects

New for 2026-27, these five Eco-Learning project guides - each following the 'Talk, Play, Act' model - introduce eco-concepts in a clear, engaging and hands-on way.

Delivering three of these projects ticks off Step 3 of the Eco-Schools Early Years programme. Click the images to go to the guides.



Fruit and Vegetables

Did you know that the production of meat has a terrible impact on the environment? Eating more plants is good for both us and our planet!

Celebrate plant-based goodness with children in 3 steps:

Talk: What do fruit and vegetables need to grow and which ones do children like to eat?

Play: Preparing a delicious fruit smoothie.

Act: Planting and picking easy-to-grow potatoes.



Trees

Trees are beautiful, majestic things. They're important too - they absorb carbon and produce the air that we breathe!

Explore trees with with children in 3 steps:

Talk: What do trees need to grow and how do they help us?

Play: Creating natural artworks, inspired by Andy Goldsworthy.

Act: Plant a tree in the ground or in a pot, or support a tree-planting charity by raising money to help more trees take root.



Litter

In the UK, millions of pieces of litter are dropped every day, harming plants and animals, whilst making our streets untidy.

Prevent and tackle litter with children in 3 steps:

Talk: Where have you seen litter and how does it make you feel when you see it on the ground?

Play: A small world activity that involves removing litter and protecting animals.

Act: A short, supervised litter-pick.



Recycling

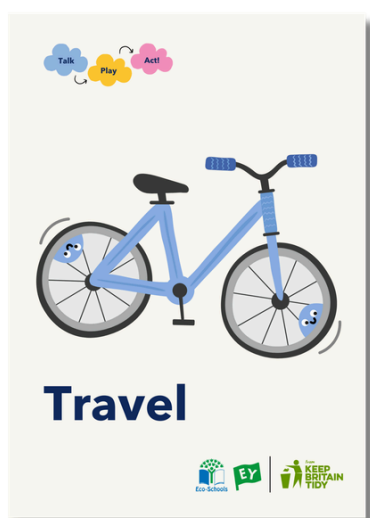
In the UK, we produce ~200 million tonnes of waste a year. At landfill, this can pollute our environment and release carbon into the atmosphere.

Explore recycling with children in 3 steps:

Talk: What could we do with something when we don't need it anymore?

Play: Get creative with junk modelling.

Act: Make recycling a part of everyday learning.



Travel

Did you know...domestic transport accounts for almost 1/3 of our country's greenhouse gas emissions?!

Celebrate active travel with children in 3 steps:

Talk: What are the different forms of travel and how does it feel when you walk, scoot, or ride to nursery?

Play: Tracking our travel to nursery and presenting this through drawing.

Act: Organising an active travel to nursery event.



**Eco-themed
hands-on activities**

Activities

The following pages feature a list of eco-friendly activities, projects, and resources that can help you build on your children's interests in a hands-on and impactful way. From creating recycled paper to growing vegetables, these activities are active, child-centred and adaptable.

We've included a simple key to help you understand whether there is a cost, how easy each activity is to deliver, and where to find supporting delivery guides.

We've also noted which of our themes each activity links to, and when in the year it can be done. Just a reminder: our themes are there to help you navigate and identify the different areas you're covering. We expect you to overlap and merge them, following the interests of your children.

The Key

<u>Cost:</u>	<u>Ease of delivery:</u>
Free There are no costs involved in delivering this project.	1 Requires minimal preparation and is easy to deliver.
£ There are potential, or small costs involved in delivering this project.	2 Requires some preparation and may require additional staff support to deliver.
££ Potentially, there are medium sized costs involved in delivering this project.	3 Requires significant preparation and additional staff support to deliver.
£££ Potentially, there are significant costs involved in delivering this project.	
Link:  Click the icon to be taken to the project	

Cut Your Carbon

Free | 1 | Energy, Global Citizenship, Waste, Water | November



Cut Your Carbon is Eco-Schools' annual carbon-reduction campaign. It takes place throughout November every year. The campaign creates a national moment, spotlighting various aspects of our daily lives that contribute to our carbon footprint. It encourages children to take positive actions at home, with family and friends, across the month to raise awareness and gently shift behaviours. With a new calculator to help you understand your setting's CO₂ savings, it's a great way to energise your nursery community.

Go on a Minibeast Hunt

Free-£ | 1 | Biodiversity | Spring/Summer



Minibeast hunts are a fantastic way to encourage young children to spend time outdoors and connect with nature. They require very little equipment and provide a fun, hands-on learning experience that supports a range of important skills, including observation, identification, pattern recognition, communication, and counting. As children search for and discover different minibeasts, they begin to learn about habitats, food chains, and the needs of living things.

Make Recycled Paper

Free | 1 | Waste, Litter | Year-Round



Making paper from recycled materials is a simple and engaging way to introduce young children to the concept of recycling. Through this hands-on activity, children can see how old paper can be transformed into something new and useful. You can extend the learning by making Christmas decorations with cookie cutters or creating seed paper to plant outdoors in spring. The Twinkl guide provides an easy introduction, and a quick online search will reveal many more ideas and tutorials to explore.

Junk Modelling

Free | 1 | Waste, Litter | Year-Round



Junk modelling is a fun and creative activity that helps children develop problem-solving, communication, fine motor, and creativity skills. Using everyday items that might otherwise be thrown away also provides a great opportunity to discuss sustainability, the importance of recycling, and how materials can be reused. This video from Family Action offers some helpful tips to get started, and a quick online search for "junk modelling ideas" will provide plenty of inspiration, including projects such as [making your own marble run](#).

Install a Wormery

£ | 2 | Biodiversity, Nursery Grounds | Year-Round



Wormeries can be purchased for under £100 ([three of Gardener's World's recommendations are within this budget](#)) and provide an excellent way to introduce children to composting, recycling, and the importance of biodiversity. By observing worms break down food waste, children gain a hands-on understanding of natural cycles and how living things help keep our environment healthy. This video from [London Early Years Foundation \(LEYF\)](#) demonstrates the value of wormeries as a learning tool, while the additional video offers insight into how children can interact with and learn from a wormery as part of their everyday experiences.



Compost with Children

£ | 2 | Healthy Living, Waste | Year-Round 

Composting is a fantastic way to teach young children about sustainability and the importance of reducing waste, while giving them a sense of ownership over their environment. As children add materials to the compost and observe them breaking down over time, they develop an understanding of natural cycles and how waste can be turned into a valuable resource. It is also a fun, hands-on activity that encourages curiosity and exploration. This accessible guide from Tops Day Nurseries includes advice on getting started, health and safety considerations, and practical activity ideas to engage your young Eco-Warriors.

Recycle with Children

Free | 1 | Waste, Litter | Year-Round 

Daily recycling offers brilliant opportunities for learning. It helps introduce children to the concepts of waste, recycling, and reusable materials, while expanding their understanding of the world around them and developing key vocabulary. Sorting recyclable items can become a fun matching and categorising activity that supports problem-solving skills, while using tools such as litter pickers and tongs can help develop fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. The video from CBeebies includes additional ideas and inspiration for incorporating recycling into everyday learning.

Go Litter-Picking

£ | 2 | Waste, Litter | Year-Round 

Litter-picking with young children empowers them to take ownership of their local environment and develop a sense of responsibility for caring for the world around them. As well as promoting environmental awareness, litter-picking can support the development of fine motor skills, teamwork, communication, and cooperation. Companies such as [Helping Hand Environmental sell short litter-pickers](#) designed specifically for nursery-aged children, while the linked Nursery World article provides further ideas and inspiration for introducing litter-picking activities in early years settings.

Bee-Bot Recycling

£ | 1 | Biodiversity, Waste, Litter | Year-Round 

This activity is a fun way to introduce children to both recycling and basic programming concepts. Children can programme Bee-Bots to transport recyclable materials to the correct recycling station, helping them develop problem-solving, sequencing, and directional skills. The activity also creates opportunities for discussion about waste, recycling, and caring for the environment. It can easily be adapted to explore other environmental themes, such as programming a Bee-Bot to collect litter before delivering it to a bin.

Learn About Plastic Pollution

£ | 1 | Marine, Litter, Waste | Year-Round 

Small world play can help young children make sense of the world around them while developing their reasoning, communication, and problem-solving skills. In this activity, children explore a marine-themed small world environment before litter is introduced to prompt discussion about pollution and its impact on wildlife. Children can then use their fine motor skills to remove the litter, helping them learn about caring for the environment through imaginative, hands-on play.

Learn About Water Conservation with a Water Wall

£-££ | 2 | Global Citizenship, Waste, Water | Spring/Summer 

Water walls help young children develop their fine motor and problem-solving skills through hands-on exploration and play. They also provide opportunities to discuss water as a valuable resource and the importance of collecting and reusing it. Ready-made water walls are available to purchase, but creating one from recycled materials, as shown in the link above, adds an extra sustainability element while encouraging creativity and reuse.

Design and Decorate a Milk Bottle Watering Can

Free | 1 | Biodiversity, Nursery Grounds, Waste | Spring/Summer 

Like many of the activities in this resource, this one links to multiple Eco-Schools topics, including Waste, Water, and Nursery Grounds. With adult support, children can make their own simple watering can from recycled materials and then use it to help care for plants in nursery or at home. One-pint milk bottles are particularly well suited to little hands.

Introduce Solar Power

£ | 1 | Energy | Year-Round 

Simple, inexpensive solar-powered resources, such as a solar water fountain, can help introduce children to the concept of solar energy and the importance of using renewable energy sources. By observing the fountain in action, children can see how sunlight powers the pump and causes the water to flow. This simple, hands-on experience helps children make connections between the sun, energy, and the ways we can use renewable resources in everyday life.

Introduce Wind Power

Free | 1 | Energy | Year-Round 

Pinwheels are simple and inexpensive to make, with plenty of templates available online. We like Twinkl's version and encourage children to decorate their pinwheels before assembling them with adult support. Once complete, they provide a fun, hands-on way to explore how wind creates movement and introduce discussions about wind power as a renewable source of energy.

Take on the LEAF Challenge

Free | 1 | Biodiversity, Healthy Living | Year-Round 

LEAF stands for 'Learning about Ecosystems And Forests'. The challenge prompts young people to head outside over half terms and holidays and complete a selection of simple mini-activities, at (or near) home. Each activity prompts families to engage with the green world around us - exploring, observing and discussing. Designed originally for infant schools, the activity is just as applicable to Early Years and can take place in gardens, local parks, woodlands or forests.



Explore Buses

Free - £ | 1 | Travel | Year-Round 

Using public transport, such as buses and trains, instead of travelling by car can help reduce carbon emissions. As many children are already familiar with buses, they provide an excellent starting point for learning and discussion. This Nursery World article contains plenty of ideas for exploring the role of buses through play and real-world experiences, both inside and outside your setting. It also offers a great opportunity to talk with children about how the choices we make when travelling can help protect our planet.

Learn How to Use Balance Bikes

£££ | 3 | Travel | Year-Round 

Introduce children to sustainable travel through balance bike activities. Suitable for children aged two and a half years and above, balance bikes help children develop confidence, coordination, and balance while learning the skills needed to ride on two wheels. Sessions are often delivered through fun games and activities, making them an engaging way to encourage active travel from an early age. Balanceability is one of several programmes available, and we recommend exploring the different options to find the approach that best suits your children and setting. We've linked to the Bikeability Trust.

Introduce Animal Yoga

Free | 1 | Biodiversity, Healthy Living | Year-Round 

Yoga is a brilliant physical activity for young children, helping them develop strength, balance, coordination, and mindfulness. It can also support emotional wellbeing by encouraging relaxation and focus. At Eco-Schools, we especially love activities that use plants and animals as inspiration, helping children build a connection with the natural world while they move and play. The video linked above is a great example, and a quick online search will reveal plenty more nature and animal-themed yoga activities suitable for Early Years settings.

Create an Activity Passport for Your Nursery

Free | 1 | Biodiversity, Healthy Living, Global Citizenship | Year-Round 

In late 2018, the Department for Education released an activity passport for children under the age of 11, inspired by the National Trust's popular [50 Things to Do Before You're 11½ initiative](#). The passport encourages children to try new experiences that support their physical health, wellbeing, confidence, and love of learning. While the document includes ideas for Reception-aged children, we recommend using it as a source of inspiration to create your own version tailored to the interests of your children, your local environment, and your setting's sustainability priorities.

Make Fruit Kebabs

£ | 1 | Global Citizenship, Healthy Living | Year-Round 

Allowing children to help create this tasty snack can make them even more excited about trying a variety of healthy fruits. The activity provides opportunities for discussion about texture, smell, taste, and appearance, while also introducing conversations about the environmental benefits of eating more plant-based foods. As children prepare the snack, they can practise counting, recognising patterns, and developing fine motor skills..

Garden

£-££ | 3 | Biodiversity, Healthy Living, Nursery Grounds | Year-Round



One of the best resources a nursery can have is a garden. Children are naturally fascinated by nature, and involving them in gardening activities can support their physical and mental wellbeing while helping them develop a connection with the natural world. Gardening also provides opportunities to build a wide range of skills, including observation, communication, responsibility, and fine motor. The RHS Campaign for School Gardening offers a wealth of practical resources and ideas. Start by exploring the link above to discover the key features that can help make an early years garden a rich and engaging learning environment.

Make a Cress 'Egg Head'

£ | 1 | Healthy Living | Year-Round



Sowing cress is a great way to introduce young children to growing their own food. It is quick, easy, and highly rewarding, with seeds often sprouting within a day and ready to harvest within a week. As children care for their cress, they gain a better understanding of where food comes from and what plants need to grow. This activity adds an extra element of fun by turning the cress into hair for a child's very own 'Egg Head'.

Grow Herbs

£ | 2 | Biodiversity, Healthy Living, Nursery Grounds | Spring/Summer



Growing herbs is a fantastic activity for young children. As they plant, water, and care for their herbs, children learn what plants need to grow and develop a sense of responsibility and achievement. Growing herbs also introduces the idea of self-sufficiency, helping children understand where food comes from. In addition, herbs provide wonderful opportunities to explore different smells, textures, and tastes.

Grow Your Own Veg

£ | 2 | Biodiversity, Healthy Living, Nursery Grounds | Year-Round



Growing vegetables is a fun and rewarding activity that helps children develop an understanding of where food comes from and how it is produced. Vegetable growing also provides opportunities to discuss healthy eating and can inspire a range of follow-up activities including food preparation and cooking. We've linked to a Tops Day Nurseries blog that contains tips for growing with children, or you can explore a list of [low-maintenance crops from Gardener's World](#) if you're new to growing.

Cook a Plant-Based Recipe

£ | 2 | Global Citizenship, Healthy Living | Year-Round



One of the best ways to reduce our carbon footprint is to eat more plant-based foods. Cooking a simple plant-based snack or meal with children can be a fun and rewarding activity that helps them learn about healthy eating and sustainable food choices. There are many child-friendly plant-based recipes available from organisations such as the BBC and the Vegan Society. We have linked to ProVeg, which offers a range of recipes specially designed for young people.



Celebrate Diversity

£ | 2 | Global Citizenship | Year-Round 

Fighting climate change is a global challenge that requires cooperation at local, national, and international levels. Taking time to celebrate different religious and cultural festivals helps children develop respect for others, appreciate diversity, and understand the importance of working together to create positive change. These celebrations can help build inclusive environments where everyone feels valued and welcome. Use this calendar, provided by NAHT, to identify key dates throughout the year and plan meaningful celebrations

Learn About the Sustainable Development Goals

Free | 2 | All Eco-Schools themes | Year-Round 

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a global blueprint for a fairer, healthier, and more sustainable future. By exploring the goals through age-appropriate discussions and activities, children can gain a better understanding of the world around them and how their actions can make a positive difference. Many of the ideas in this resource link directly to the SDGs, such as exploring solar and wind power to support Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy, or using marine-themed small world play to introduce Goal 14: Life Below Water. [The World's Largest Lesson](#) also offers a wide range of free resources to help bring the goals to life for young learners.

Create a Natural Sculpture

Free | 1 | Biodiversity, Marine, Waste | Autumn 

One of our favourite artists is Andy Goldsworthy, who has been creating artworks using natural materials since the 1970s. Collecting leaves, sticks, stones, and other natural treasures can help young children explore nature and observe seasonal changes. Arranging these materials into patterns and artworks encourages creativity and an appreciation of the beauty of the natural world. The linked video showcases examples of Andy Goldsworthy's work, offers guidance on getting started, and provides inspiration for creating your own nature-based art.

Create a Nature Rubbing

Free | 1 | Biodiversity | Autumn 

Creating rubbings of leaves, bark, and other natural objects is a simple activity that encourages children to explore and appreciate the natural world. As they observe different textures, shapes, and patterns, they can develop their fine motor skills and attention to detail. The activity also provides a great opportunity to discuss the similarities and differences between native trees and plants. Why not combine it with a visit to a local park, woodland, or other green space to extend the learning and discover a wider variety of natural materials?

'Print' a Leaf

Free | 1 | Biodiversity | Autumn 

Leaf printing is similar to creating a rubbing but can produce even more striking results. By painting and printing with leaves, young children are encouraged to look more closely at their shapes, patterns, and textures, helping them develop a greater appreciation of the natural world. The activity also provides opportunities to explore colour, be creative, and continue to develop fine motor skills. Why not create a gallery of the children's prints and invite parents and carers to come and admire their work?

Feed the Birds

Free | 1 | Biodiversity, Nursery Grounds | Year-Round



The CBeebies link above features three simple bird feeders that are easy and enjoyable to make with young children. Taking part in the activity helps children develop practical skills while learning how they can support local wildlife. Bird feeders also provide opportunities to observe and talk about different bird species visiting your outdoor space. A quick online search will reveal many more ideas, including the [National Trust's recycled toilet roll bird feeder](#). Don't forget to check and refill feeders regularly, especially during the winter months when food can be harder for birds to find.

Make a Plastic Bottle Plant Pot

Free | 1 | Biodiversity, Nursery Grounds | Year-Round



Every young person should have the opportunity to grow something. A great way to make this activity even more enjoyable is by encouraging children to get creative and make or decorate a recycled plant pot for their seedlings. We love these [simple plant pots made from recycled drinks bottles](#) (an adult will need to cut the bottles first). Alternatively, click the link above for more ideas, including plant pots made from toilet roll tubes and used coffee cups.

'Traffic-light' to Save Energy

Free | 1 | Energy | Year-Round



Do all the lights in every room need to be switched on all the time? Do devices need to remain on when they are not being used? This Eco-Schools project was originally designed for schools, but the idea can be easily adapted for nursery settings. By creating a simple traffic light system, children and staff can quickly identify which lights, devices, and switches should be on and which can be turned off. This practical activity helps raise awareness of energy use, encourages positive habits, and supports efforts to reduce unnecessary energy consumption.

Grow Sunflowers

£ | 1 | Biodiversity, Nursery Grounds | Spring



At Eco-Schools, we think sunflowers are the symbol of summer, and we want future generations to make the same association. Sunflowers are bright, impressive, and easy to grow from seed, making them ideal for growing with young children. Giving children responsibility for planting, watering, and caring for sunflowers helps them learn what plants need to thrive. Their rapid growth also provides plenty of opportunities for observation, discussion, and awe!

Sponsor a Species

£ | 1 | Biodiversity, Global Citizenship | Year-Round



Allow children in your setting to build a connection with wildlife by adopting an animal. An adopted species can provide a focus for discussions, stories, artwork, and other learning activities, helping children develop empathy and an appreciation for the natural world. Many adoption schemes also include a cuddly toy, which can be used to extend learning opportunities. For example, why not create a diary for the toy, sending it home with a different family each weekend and inviting children to share its adventures? We have linked to the Wildlife Trust, which focuses on native species, but organisations such as WWF offer similar schemes featuring animals from around the world.



Explore Senses Through Nature

£-££ | 3 | Biodiversity, Healthy Living, Nursery Grounds | Spring/Summer 

Sensory gardens encourage physical activity, support emotional wellbeing, and can help children feel calm and connected to nature. They provide a wide range of learning opportunities, from caring for plants and exploring seasonal change to investigating colours, textures, scents, sounds, and tastes. [This guide](#) provides a simple introduction, while the Royal Horticultural Society link includes helpful advice on choosing plants that appeal to each of the senses.

Make a Wildflower Seed Ball

£ | 1 | Biodiversity, Nursery Grounds | Spring/Autumn 

Seed balls are easy to make and provide a fun, hands-on way to introduce children to growing wildflowers. Children can take an active role in mixing and shaping the seed balls, helping them learn what plants need to grow while developing teamwork, communication, and fine motor skills. There's also the excitement of distributing their seedballs outdoors to look forward to!

Go Birdwatching

Free | 1 | Biodiversity, Global Citizenship | Winter/Year-Round 

Every year in January, the RSPB's Big Schools' Birdwatch takes place, giving children the opportunity to contribute to one of the UK's largest citizen science projects. Birdwatching helps children develop observation, counting, and identification skills as they learn to recognise different bird species and discuss their features. The RSPB, along with organisations such as Twinkl, provides a wide range of resources to extend the learning beyond the one-hour event.

Go Pond Dipping

Free | 2 | Biodiversity | Spring/Summer 

Pond dipping is a wonderful way to explore local wildlife. It provides opportunities to observe and identify a variety of pond creatures, discuss habitats and life cycles, and learn about the needs of living things. Children are often fascinated by discoveries such as tadpoles growing into frogs, helping them develop a deeper understanding of the natural world. Using nets, trays, and magnifiers also supports the development of fine motor and observation skills, making pond dipping a rich and engaging learning experience.

Help a Hedgehog

Free-£ | 1 | Biodiversity, Nursery Grounds | Autumn 

Hedgehogs are one of the UK's best-loved wild animals, but their numbers are declining and they are now considered vulnerable to extinction in Great Britain. Helping children create a simple hedgehog home, such as the one shown in the linked video, is a great way to introduce wildlife conservation while developing design, construction, and problem-solving skills. Once complete, the habitat can become a focus for learning about hedgehogs and the challenges they face. You could also read hedgehog-themed stories and explore other ways to [make your nursery grounds more wildlife-friendly](#).

Build a Bug Hotel

Free-£ | 2 | Biodiversity, Nursery Grounds | Year-Round



Young children love creepy crawlies, and for good reason. Insects play a vital role in our world, helping to pollinate the food we eat and break down natural waste. Without them, many ecosystems would struggle to survive. Creating a bug hotel is a simple and engaging way to help children learn about these important creatures while supporting local biodiversity. A quick online search will reveal plenty of ideas, and the RSPB's video guide above is a great place to start.

Create a Single-use-plastic Mural

Free | 2 | Marine, Waste | Year-Round



Single-use plastics often end up in our oceans, where they can have a harmful impact on marine wildlife and habitats. Why not take action by collecting single-use plastics from around your nursery and turning them into a thought-provoking mural or display with the children? This creative activity helps raise awareness of plastic pollution while encouraging discussion about waste, recycling, and protecting our environment. You could also invite families to audit their use of single-use plastics at home and contribute materials for the project. The link above includes some inspiring examples of environmental artwork created from discarded plastics.

Create a Mini-Pond

Free-£ | 1 | Biodiversity, Waste | Winter/Year-Round



This brilliant activity from the Wildlife Trust guides you through creating a mini pond, a smaller and safer alternative to a traditional pond that is ideal for early years settings. It also provides a fantastic opportunity to upcycle old items such as washing-up bowls, large plant pots, or even disused sinks. Children can be involved in building the mini pond and choosing the plants and features it contains, helping them develop a sense of ownership and connection with nature. Mini ponds can attract a variety of wildlife and provide an excellent opportunity to observe habitats, lifecycles, and biodiversity up close, while also creating a valuable water source for birds, hedgehogs, and other visiting wildlife.

Deliver a Sporty Pledge Event for a Green Cause

Free | 2 | Global Citizenship, Healthy Living | Year-Round



This Eco-Schools project was originally designed for schools, but it can be easily adapted for early years settings and is a great way to engage your whole nursery community in positive climate action. Inspired by the Paris Climate Agreement, it takes the idea of a traditional sponsorship event and gives it a sustainable twist, asking sponsors to pledge environmentally friendly actions rather than money. The project encourages discussion, raises awareness, and helps children and families work together to make a positive difference.

Build a Bee Bath

Free-£ | 1 | Biodiversity, Nursery Grounds | Summer



Providing a shallow water source in your nursery is a wonderful way to support bees. The shallow design helps keep bees safe while giving them easy access to water, which they need for more than drinking. Bees use water to aid digestion, feed developing larvae, and regulate temperatures inside their hive. They're very simple and cheap to make, check out the video guide from Royal Parks linked to above.

Plan a Plastic Free Picnic

£ | 2 | Healthy Living, Marine, Nursery Grounds, Waste | Summer



We love a picnic! They're a great excuse to get outside and connect with nature, while providing valuable opportunities for social interaction and the development of communication skills. Picnics are also a fantastic way to promote healthy eating, especially when children are encouraged to try a variety of fruits, vegetables, and other plant-based foods. Involving children in planning the picnic can create additional learning opportunities, such as making shopping lists, counting items, and discussing food choices. You can read more about organising a picnic in a nursery setting here, or explore the linked article on plastic-free picnics to extend learning beyond healthy eating and introduce sustainable everyday behaviours too.

Make a Rain Gauge

Free | 1 | Nursery Grounds, Water | Year-Round



Creating a rain gauge is a very simple, free project that can help children understand the weather, the water cycle, and why rain is so important for plants, insects, animals, and people. Children can help measure rainfall, compare results over time, and look for patterns as the seasons change. The activity can lead to rich discussions about where rain comes from, why living things need water, and how it supports life on Earth. It also provides plenty of opportunities to develop early maths skills through counting, measuring, and recording observations.

Plant a Pollinator Patch

£ | 2 | Biodiversity, Healthy Living, Nursery Grounds | Spring/Summer



A pollinator patch can be as small as 1m², making it an accessible project that even very young children can take ownership of. Children can help prepare the ground, plant, water, and even create signs celebrating their patch. And despite its small size, a pollinator patch can provide a valuable habitat and feeding area for wildlife, helping to connect green spaces and support biodiversity, even in very urban areas.

Organise a Toy Swap

Free | 2 | Global Citizenship, Waste | Year-Round



A toy swap is a great way to reduce waste, save money, and build a sense of community. It is an especially valuable activity for young children, as it introduces the idea of a circular economy in a simple and meaningful way by showing that toys can be reused and enjoyed by others rather than thrown away. The project also encourages sharing, empathy, and consideration for others. Organising the swap can inspire additional learning opportunities, such as sorting, matching, and classifying toys. In fact, it supports a wide range of areas of learning and development, including Personal, Social and Emotional Development, Communication and Language, Mathematics, and Understanding the World. The guide from Liverpool City Region, which we've linked to, should help you get started!

Plan a Nature Walk Scavenger Hunt

Free | 1 | Biodiversity, Healthy Living, Nursery Grounds | Year-Round



A nature-inspired scavenger hunt is a fantastic way to develop children's communication, observation and exploration skills. From an Eco-Schools perspective, it also helps to showcase the rich diversity of wildlife and natural features that exist right on our doorsteps, even in urban environments. By encouraging young people to look closely at the world around them, scavenger hunts can help children connect with nature and understand our responsibility to protect and coexist with it. The Twinkl worksheet linked above can be used as it is, or as inspiration for creating a bespoke version tailored to your grounds, local area, or learning objectives.



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Eco-Schools is managed in England by Keep Britain Tidy on behalf of the Foundation for Environmental Education

Wigan office

Elizabeth House
The Pier
Wigan
WN3 4EX
01942 612621

London office

The Green House
244-254 Cambridge Heath Road
London
E2 9DA
0208 076 9262

www.eco-schools.org.uk

Facebook /EcoSchoolsEngland

Instagram /ecoschools_england/

X @EcoSchools

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