

Compiled by: Learning about Forests (LEAF)  
COVID-19 Response - Activities for LEAF schools

### Introduction

The following contains LEAF related activities that can be done from home. We recommend that you use the sustainability audit as an introduction before going further into the activities. Please feel free to make changes to accommodate the the guidelines where you are located. The activities below are a compilation from LEAF Ireland and Eco-schools England. We hope you like them!

### Theme: Biodiversity

In many places biodiversity is decreasing. This means that a lot of species are at risk of becoming extinct or maybe already have become extinct. The most common reason for extinction is a threat to the plants' or animals' habitat. One animal or plant becoming extinct can have an effect on the entire ecosystem, which makes biodiversity an important issue.

For more information about biodiversity and species extinction, check out the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species to get information of risk status' of different animals and plants. [iucnredlist.org](https://www.iucnredlist.org) Remember to check to see if your country has its own national red list.



# LEAF - BIODIVERSITY: SUSTAINABILITY AUDIT

The Biodiversity Audit helps you identify the current issues with local biodiversity.

Create a list of things from nearby nature or even at your home (could be insects, herbs, flowers, trees, birds, food grains, seeds). Find as much information as possible on the items on the list and, if possible, take or find pictures of them as well. Be sure not to disturb or harm any life forms that you observe.

## Examples of guiding questions for creating the list could be

- What is the common name?
- Is it rare or common to the area?
- What are the key characteristics that you can observe and why does the organism have them?
- Is the item native to the area or has it been introduced? If the latter, when and why/how was it introduced and where did it come from?
- If the organism is only seen in some seasons, then what are its migration paths?
- Is it something humans consume or use for medicine, building or something else?
- What is the food chain or food web that you can create from your observations?

## Possible sources of information

- Ask local experts and people around you, if possible
- Use apps such as eBird (a website and an app where you can enter bird observations and learn more about the different species), nest watch (an app-based project that tracks nesting birds in North America), Insect Identification (an app that helps you identify insects and also allows you to make your collection of insects you've found), PlantNet Plant Identification, LeafSnap or PlantSnap (apps that help identify plants or trees by taking pictures of them/their leaves, fruits, bark).

Share the facts with others on Social Media using the hashtags

[#connectwithnature](#) and [#leafanywhere](#), or tell neighbours, family and friends interesting facts about the results of the audit.

# LEAF - ACTIVITY: EYE SPY

Tick the box if you spotted...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
A brown leaf	<input type="checkbox"/>
A berry	<input type="checkbox"/>
A wind-dispersed seed	<input type="checkbox"/>
An insect on the bark of a tree or under a rock	<input type="checkbox"/>
A herbivore	<input type="checkbox"/>
A carnivore	<input type="checkbox"/>
A feather	<input type="checkbox"/>
A fungus	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lichen on the trunk of a tree or a wall	<input type="checkbox"/>
A green leaf	<input type="checkbox"/>
Something unusual	<input type="checkbox"/>
A fern	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moss	<input type="checkbox"/>
A deciduous tree	<input type="checkbox"/>
A coniferous tree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signs of an animal (e.g. droppings, nibbled food, tracks)	<input type="checkbox"/>
A millipede or centipede	<input type="checkbox"/>
A place where an animal lives	<input type="checkbox"/>

What was the unusual thing you spotted?

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# LEAF - ACTIVITY: LOOK AROUND

## Tree Watch

### Nursery

Listen to the noise the leaves on a tree make as the wind blows through them. Imagine the trees are talking to each other- what do you think the trees could be saying to each other? Draw a picture of your favourite tree and add all the nice messages the tree might say to make the other plants and animals feel happier.

### Primary

Pick a tree from your local neighbourhood or within school grounds, give your tree a name and write a diary entry from the tree's perspective—including details of the animals you see and how the weather affects your branches and leaves. Does your tree have any friends they wave to in the wind?

### Secondary/College

Watch this short clip about the 'Wood Wide Web,' list the different ways that trees interact with each other. Create an ecosystem and food web mind map for a UK woodland or tropical rainforest with trees at the centre- how might this change if trees are removed?

### Additional Task

Imagine your home or school is in the centre of a 100m<sup>2</sup> grid. Count how many trees are in your imaginary grid—do you think there are enough to keep the people around you happy and healthy? If not consider how you could increase the number of trees in your area: planting? Asking local 'Friends Of,' groups or the council? Writing to your local MP? Asking your headteacher or school governors? You could use these ideas to green your local area when lockdown ends!

## Lichen & Moss

### Nursery

Look at walls or fences outside your home can you spot any natural, different coloured patches? This is probably lichen or moss! have a closer look and see if you can find any tiny creatures on the lichen or moss. Imagine what it would be like to be so small you could live on moss or lichen!

### Primary

Find some lichen or moss on a wall or fence outside—look closely at it, maybe even take a photo. Next, produce a piece of art mimicking the magnified colours and textures of moss or lichen.

### Secondary/College

Lichen and moss are good indicators of air quality with more moss and lichen present in areas with better air quality. Use this link to determine the level of air pollution around your home or school by carrying out a lichen audit.

### Additional Task

It is relatively easy to grow lichen and moss, if you search the internet you can find plenty of guides on growing your own, some of which even tell you how to create natural moss or lichen artworks—give it a go!



# Green Fingers

## All Age Groups

You don't need an allotment, garden or even garden centre to grow your own! Our challenge to you, is to see how many vegetables you can grow on a windowsill: Can you grow spring onions in water using the leftover roots? Can you plant potato peelings? Can your carrot tops sprout new carrots? There are plenty of Youtube videos and online guides to help you grow your own—we challenge you to give it a try!

## Ground Designs

### Nursery

On a piece of paper draw a picture, using all of your favourite colours, of the flowers and plants that you like the most. Next time you are doing your daily exercise, see if you can spot any flowers or plants that look like the ones you have drawn. When you return to nursery or school, show your teacher the drawing and ask them if they can help make your school or nursery as colourful as your picture.

### Primary

Fold a piece of paper so you have four sections, each one of these sections will be one of the four seasons (Spring, Summer, Autumn & Winter). In each of the seasons, write or draw plants and wildlife that thrive during that season. When you return to school show this to your Eco-Coordinator, they may be able to use it as a blueprint for making your school eco all year round!

### Secondary/College

Design a new natural area of your school grounds, that would cost very little to create—think about how you could repurpose items, get seeds for free or ask for donations. When you return to school, show your plans to your Eco-Coordinator to see if it's possible to make your budget eco-garden a reality.

## Living Connections

Our friends at [Living Connections](http://www.livingconnections.org/) (<http://www.livingconnections.org/>) are providing fun and interactive virtual resources to help children in school or at home connect with nature. Listen to the 'quacking' noise bees make or watch a slug munch on its lunch in our final, virtual reality task.

### Nursery

Go to [livingconnections.org](http://livingconnections.org) and go on the Bumble Bee Virtual trail—can you find the queen bumble bee or some bee-friendly wildflowers?

### Primary

Go to [livingconnections.org](http://livingconnections.org) and go on St Alban's CE Primary School Secret Nature Trail—can you complete all of the challenges they have set?

### Secondary/College

Go to [livingconnections.org](http://livingconnections.org) and go on the Be More Gilbert Virtual Trail—can you find out more about naturalist Gilbert White and complete the challenges?

