Collect and do at home

You can make natural dyes with different parts of a variety of plants. Blackberries (purple), any part of an oak (brown), walnuts (brown), nettle tops (yellow), sweet chestnut twigs (brown), conkers (brown), elderberries (blues & purples).

Collect these on your autumn walk, then visit: www.forestry.gov.uk/westonbirt-seasonalplay to create your own woodland dyes.

more family fun

www.forestry.gov.uk/westonbirt-families

www.naturedetectives.org.uk

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images: www.moorhen.demon.co.uk, Chris Meakin, Isabel Cameron, Paul Groom, John McFarlane, WTPL Bruce Beattie, Pete Holmes, Keith Huggett, Ian Jamison, iStockphoto Konradlew, Plelo, Taso_H, plinney, garyforsyth, JPStrickler, narvikk. Illustrations by Michelle Davies

Forestry Commission England

WOODLAND TRUST

playing through the seasons

autumn

WESTONBIRT THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM

Woodland Trust nature detectives

Acorn hunt

Squirrels and jays are just two of the woodland animals that store food ready for the winter. They need to have a good memory to find them again! Could you survive as a squirrel?

Collect 5-10 acorns from the woodland floor, from beneath an oak tree. Find a good place to store or bury them.
Go off for a walk, then come back and see if you can find them!

Why not really test yourself and store the acorns on one visit to the woodland, then look for them the next time you come!

Leaf crowns

Collect a variety of leaves. Select two leaves and remove the leaf stalks. Overlap the leaves and pin together using one of leaf stalks. Take another leaf, remove the leaf stalk, and pin. Keep going, adding one leaf at a time until there are enough joined together to go around your head. Use the final leaf stalk to join the first and last leaves together.

Alternatively, prepare your crown at home - cut a strip of card, long enough to go around your head. Add a strip of double-sided tape and then staple or tape the card to the right size. Take your crown with you on your walk, decorating it by adding leaves to the double-sided sticky tape as you go.

Autumn scents

Bring a plastic cup or beaker with you on the walk.

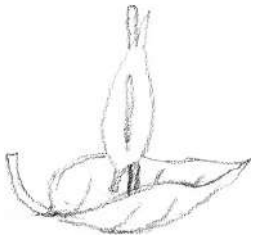
Add a dash of water and find a stick.
As you find things on the woodland floor, add to your cup, mash, stir and smell.

Keep adding until you have created a wonderful autumn scent.
When you have finished, why not find a good place to empty your cup – who knows, a woodland animal may come and discover it later!

Leaf creations

What could you create for a woodland animal using just fallen leaves and twigs?

A sleeping bag for a millipede?
A boat for a wood mouse?
An umbrella for an owl?



You can create many things by stitching the leaves together.
Here's how to do it.

Find yourself some fallen leaves and thin but strong fallen twigs. Overlap the leaves and use your thumbnails to carefully make a hole through both layers. Now make a second hole near the first.

Push your thin twig down through the first hole and up through the second.

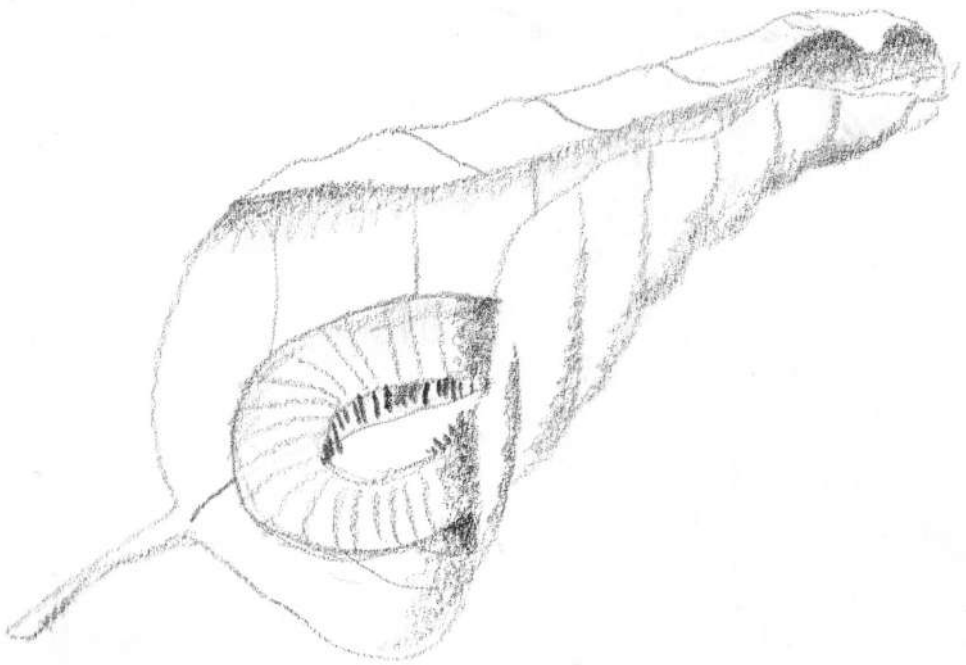
Your leaves are now stitched together!

Now you've practiced leaf stitching you can start creating...

Minibeasts in the mulch

A leafy carpet provides our woodland invertebrates with plenty of places to shelter and hide. Find a good spot and carefully look under the leaves. If you find fallen leaves that have rolled up, carefully unroll the leaf, look inside and then gently place back on the ground.

Rhododendron leaves are great for this. You may be lucky enough to find a black ground beetle, an earwig, a tiny slug, snail or spider!



Leaf storm

(best done on a dry day!)

Create a large pile of fallen leaves and then use your feet to create the sounds of a storm.

Here's a suggestion of what you could do:

Stand with one foot buried beneath the leaves.

Take a small handful of leaves and wait for the storm to arrive...

A breeze blew gently through the tree tops ... one at a time start to gently rustle the leaves with your feet.

As it began to get stronger .... begin to rustle more loudly

The leaves started to dance in the air and swirl around ... throw your handful of leaves in the air

The storm had arrived! ... stomp and kick the leaves as loudly as you can!

After a while the storm passed, the winds died down and all was calm once more ... settle back to quiet rustling and then silence

Elf houses

Where do you think a woodland elf might like to live?

When you've found a suitable place create a home for them.

Look for woodland objects to help you create the doorway, or to build the whole house with.

You could even find objects for inside the home, or create a garden.

What have you spotted?

☐ butterflies

red admirals, speckled wood and brimstone butterflies

☐ galls

Knopper galls, spangle galls, marble galls or cola nut galls

☐ ivy

watch bees and butterflies visiting ivy flowers

☐ harvestmen

8 legs with 1 body part, look for them on oak bark

☐ squirrels

watch for them gathering acorns and other seeds

☐ webs

spider webs glistening with morning dew

☐ owls

listen for tawny owls hooting in the evening

☐ skeletons

look for leaf skeletons on the woodland floor

☐ birds

visiting rowan trees for a berry feast

☐ lookout

be still and quite – what can you spot?

☐ mushrooms

can you find a mushroom that has been nibbled?

☐ badgers

look for old badger bedding left outside the sett

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Woodland snakes and autumn flowers

Collect some fallen leaves of different colours.

Lay them in a line to create a woodland snake, slithering between the trees, through holes and over logs (you may have to leaf stitch these!)

Look for leaves of different colours to create an autumn flower.

Don't forget to turn the leaves over – you'll often find a different shade or colour!

Scavenger hunt

How many of these autumn treasures can you find and collect?

A tough or shiny evergreen leaf that has been shed

The sound of a nut falling to the ground

2 different types of winged seed

A lobed leaf (like an oak leaf)

A plump sweet chestnut

An acorn in its cup

Fallen pine needles

A parachute seed

A shiny conker

A leaf with teeth

A pine cone (thick woody scales or bracts)

A fir cone (thinner more flexible scales or bracts)

The sound of the wind in the tree tops

A fallen twig covered in moss or lichen

A star-shaped leaf (look for sycamore and maples)

10 leaves each with a different autumn colour or shade

A prickly sweet chestnut shell, opened to show the furry lining

The sound of an animal rustling in the dead leaves or undergrowth