

Healing In The Fields And Forests



The project is a discovery spanning across four seasons
This is our Autumn Story



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Forestry
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Healing in the Fields and Forest is an intercultural, intergenerational, four-season foraging adventure involving the Scottish Nepalese community and friends. Funded by Forestry Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage, our project involved 8 visits to the local countryside. Here we enjoyed nature through interactive activities exploring the traditional medicinal and cosmetic uses of native Scottish trees and plants, and the folklore surrounding them.



A Walk of Discovery

Our last Healing in the Fields and Forest was near Gorebridge in Midlothian, where we explored the hedgerows, woods and fields within walking distance of North Middleton village hall. The weather was quite cold and wet with the leaves turning different shades of orange and brown. We walked in the nearby fields and woods and picked lots of haws, rosehips and elderberries. There were also a few brambles left to eat straight from the bushes. In the afternoon workshop at the village hall, we made our own hawthorn tincture from the haws we had picked. We learnt that this is good for the heart. We also had a few rowanberries, as well as sloes from the blackthorn bush, which we used in the same way. We spent a while taking the elderberries off the stalks and topping and tailing the rosehips. When they were ready, we boiled them with some water for 15 mins then strained off the juice through a muslin bag. Then we boiled the juice with some sugar or honey to make a



delicious syrup which is full of Vitamin C and good for keeping you healthy during the winter.

Trees and Plants on the Walk

Many wild berries are edible and most are exceptionally high in Vitamin C and other vitamins and nutrients. At North Middleton we picked rosehips, elderberries and hawthorn berries to make traditional medicinal preserves.

Rosehips (top right) were gathered by country people in abundance after the Second World War and sold to the Government who made Rosehip Syrup, a vital vitamin source for children. Elderberries (right) have antiviral properties and help prevent and ease flu and cold symptoms. Red Hawthorn berries (below) are used to make Hawthorn Gin or Brandy. In herbal medicine, hawthorn is used as a heart tonic to protect the heart and help balance blood pressure. We also found late herbs such as Wild Mint (bottom left) and Yarrow (bottom right). Yarrow, tinctured in alcohol, makes a great aftershave as it helps to quickly stop any bleeding from cuts and nicks.



Making a Berry Vitamin Syrup

Pick soft berries from August/September (e.g. elderberry) and hard berries after the first frost in October/November (e.g. rosehip or hawthorn). Sort your berries or hips out, removing sticks and any spoiled ones. (Rinsing is only necessary if pesticides are used in the area.) Chop roughly and put in a large saucepan. Cover with water to 2 or 3 cm above the berries. (About 2 litres of water per 1 kg of fruit). Bring to the boil. Simmer for 15 minutes. Remove from the



heat. Roughly mash the berries with a potato masher to release all the juice. Leave to cool for 15 minutes or so. Strain through a jelly bag (or piece of muslin) and put the berries back in the pan and add one more litre of water. Repeat. Strain. Then follow either method below:

Sugar Method: For each litre of juice add 300g of sugar. Heat and stir until the sugar dissolves. Bring to the boil and boil for five minutes. Pour into sterilised bottles, cap and leave to cool. Can be kept in a cool dark place for up to a year.

Honey Method: For every two cups of juice, add one cup of honey and heat until warm. Stir and bottle. This syrup must be kept in the fridge.

Rosehip Syrup High in Vitamin C and a great cough syrup.

Elderberry Syrup High in Vitamin C and prevents/treats flu. Take 1 tablespoon a day to support immunity. If you get flu take 1 teaspoon once an hour for the first day then 3 tablespoons 3 times a day until better.

Sloe Syrup Has anti-rheumatic and digestif properties.

Hawthorn Syrup To relieve stress and nerves.

Rowanberry Syrup High in Vitamin A & C, stimulates the metabolism.

Dilute syrup with plain or sparkling water for a refreshing drink or add boiling water to make a warming winter drink!

Making a Berry Tincture

A tincture is when herbs (in this case berries) are infused in alcohol which is a preservative. The medicinal properties of the berries are dissolved into the alcohol. In old country days, a small spoon taken regularly, was used as a medicine for different complaints.

Sort the dry berries and cut off their tops and stalks. Pack into a preserving jar, sprinkling a little sugar between layers. Once you have reached the top of the jar, fill with cheap (supermarket own brand will do) gin or vodka, or use vinegar for a weaker non-alcoholic version.

Seal and put in a cupboard. Every week give the jar a shake and top up if necessary. Keep for at least three months. After three months, the berries will have lost their colour and the tincture turned a shade of pink. Filter off into bottles and use just a teaspoonful at a time.

Hawthorn Tincture: Protects and strengthens the heart against the effects of high blood pressure and stress.

Cranberry Tincture: Helpful for cystitis and urinary tract infections

Sloe Tincture: For digestion, diarrhoea and bowel problems

Rowanberry Tincture: Very high in Pro-vitamin A and Vitamin C. Reputed to be a remedy to support many ailments from the common cold and rheumatism to kidney and urinary diseases.

Berry Balsamic Vinegar: After soaking berries in vinegar for a week (or up to three months for a strong vinegar), filter off





the liquid. Add an equal amount of brown sugar and boil for 10 minutes to thicken. Bottle and seal with a cork or plastic cap. Use as a balsamic vinegar on salads and in sauces.

Children's Woodland Activities

In the morning we each made a shoulder bag by folding paper - origami style - threading wool through them to make shoulder bags. We decorated them with autumn pictures and wrote our names on them. Each bag had two sections - one for collecting beautiful fallen autumn leaves and one for collecting autumn berries.



We headed off down a country road, climbing over a wooden gate and down a country lane. We helped the adults collect Elderberries. Some of us with wellies went into a field of long wet grass where we found lots of Hawthorns and Rosehips. The storyteller told us that in Celtic lore the Hawthorn is a magical tree that represents the spirit of the untamed wild - if anybody harmed the tree they would have bad luck! We picked the hawthorn berries very carefully after hearing that! And we were careful to leave plenty of the high up berries for the birds to eat too. We spotted many hedgerow plants like wild mint which we picked to make tea. The boys found a tall plant with feathery leaves and strong-smelling white/pinkish flowers called Yarrow. In the olden days, Scottish farmers would tie a bunch of Yarrow to the barn door to protect animals from witchcraft.



Back in the village hall we laid out all the coloured leaves we had collected - red, green, gold, brown yellow, bronze and copper. We used the leaves to make masks and crowns. We went outside and wore our

masks like camouflage! We used clay to make 'Incredible Berry Bugs' and laid out an exhibition of all our work. We ended the day with the story of Gawain and the Green Giant before we tasted the Rosehip Syrup and Elderberry Syrup – it tasted yummy – and its good for us like medicine!

For Autumn Art ideas and lots of other great nature inspired activities to do with your family and friends check out The Woodland Trust's

Nature Detective resources at:
www.naturedetectives.org.uk



Lasting Impressions

I enjoyed picking the berries. Everything was wonderful. I wanted to know more about herbs. **Smriti Thakuri**

Health and well being is an extremely important part of everyone's life and especially when it can be done in a cost-effective and organic way. Please keep it up so a lot more people can benefit from your knowledge and passion. **Gopal Lama**

The community spirit and Nepalese singing whilst collecting plants was great. **Lesley Watson**

I learned how to make medicine from berries and other herbal plants. I really enjoyed being active and working together. **Salil Shahya**

I most enjoyed making the bugs because everyone's was different. I didn't know that you could make a syrup from mint. **Lorna, age 11**

I picked blackberries for the first time. **Samakat**

I enjoyed picking wild berries and learning their values in medicine. I believe by learning this it would help me in future when I learn medicine.

Mingsho Limbu

I enjoyed making a syrup medicine using lots of berries because using these kinds of methods we can preserve our environment and respect our nature. **Yasoda Roka**

I enjoyed learning to make rosehip syrup because it really has medicinal value and can be found easily. **Kabita KC**

I liked the story about the green giant. I liked making my green man mask with leaves. I liked playing outside. **Shanta, age 5**

I tried elderberry syrup. It was gorgeous. I wish I could have it a million times. **Sam Lama, age 7**

I enjoyed the walk and collecting wild herbs and fruits. I gained lots of knowledge. **Radha Rai**

Healing in the Fields and Forests promotes the therapeutic and health benefits of plants growing in green space and woodlands, seeking to inspire a life-long interest in and love of nature and the great outdoors.

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used in this workshop go to
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If your group is interested in taking part in a similar project
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[www. forestry.gov.scot/engagement](http://www.forestry.gov.scot/engagement)



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Scottish Forestry is the Scottish Government agency responsible for
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