

Healing In The Fields And Forests



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



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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 Scottish Forestry 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 second Healing in the Fields and Forests workshop was at very special 18th century garden called Redhall Walled Garden, on the banks of the Water of Leith, in Colinton Dell, West Edinburgh. In the morning we went for a delightful walk around the garden, through some woodland and along the riverside footpath. As it was Spring there were plenty of young, green leaves from cleavers, nettle, dandelion and wild garlic which we gathered to use in the afternoon workshop. The children enjoyed the earth hut!

Trees and Plants on the Walk

Goosegrass also called Sticky Willy was picked to make one of our juices. Known as cleaver by herbalists, it eases water retention and is a tonic for the lymphatic system - so great for a detox juice to kick start weight loss. Nettles and dandelion leaves also help the body get rid of water. The young leaves are the least bitter!

We also found Jack in the Hedge which is a mild garlicky salad herb. The best wild garlic and threecornered leeks were growing abundantly near the river and we picked these for our juices and also to make a pesto for lunch. We also found wild cress and chickweed for our salad!

Lady's mantle has skin tightening properties, so is widely used in cosmetics to firm and tone the skin to guard against wrinkles. Many of the trees were starting to blossom like the pretty wild cherries and dandelions were in full bloom.

Making Herbal Juices

Making juices and smoothies is the best way of getting plant nutrients, vitamins and minerals straight into your body when the plants are at their freshest and very best. Use a liquidiser or food processor for smoothies and a juicer, or a hand mincer, for juices. Use wild herbs and add chopped fruit and spices for taste and extra health. Try the following but experiment wildly!

- Nettle leaves
- Beetroot cubes (raw not cooked)
- Ginger
- Goosegrass
- Pears (or apples)
- Lemon juice
- Young dandelion leaves (a tiny amount)
- Wild garlic leaves
- Celery (or lovage) stalks
- Goosegrass or mint
- Cucumbers
- Lime juice
- Parsley (just a handful)
- Carrots
- Tomatoes (with salt and pepper)
- Mint (peppermint or garden mint)
- Lemons (use plenty of lemons)
- Honey





Infusing Herbal Oils

Herbs and plants contain a variety of useful properties. By macerating (chopping and soaking) them in oil, the properties move from the plant to the oil. Chop the herbs roughly and put them in a bowl. Cover them with warm oil. You can use sunflower oil, sweet almond oil or any other oil but avoid very greasy ones. Cover and leave for a week. Then strain the herbs out. The oil may have changed colour as it has now extracted the herbal properties. It can be scented with essential oils (about 10 drops per 100ml). Essential oils also contain plant properties.

Joint Oil

Comfrey's name comes from Latin 'confera', meaning knitting together. Leaves or roots in an ointment are used for bruising, sciatica, rheumatism, neuralgia, varicose veins, joint and muscular pain, pulled tendons and skin conditions. Essential oils for muscles and joints include cypress, juniper, ginger, rosemary, sage, marjoram and pine.

Skin Oil

Lady's mantle gives a firming effect to the elasticity of the skin and helps to balance moisture. This toning action which helps to tighten the skin gives it a reputation for reducing lines and wrinkles. Essential oils for delicate skin include sweet orange, grapefruit, neroli, lavender, benzoin and frankincense.

Children's Woodland Activities

We started off our day in the beautiful walled garden, creating collage tree pictures using fallen leaves, petals, tiny flowers, berries, seeds and bark. Even the toddlers loved this activity. We sat on the

grass in the spring sunshine and found all the art materials we needed lying in the garden. We made a sycamore 'wand' cut from sycamore branches in the woods and had fun peeling the bark off leaving the stick almost white. The bark was soft and smelled sweet. Using coloured wool and thread we decorated these 'journey sticks' to talk on our walk. We went through woods where we tied feathers and fir cones to our sticks. In a clearing we found a patch of comfrey which we learned was a healing plant to wrap around injuries (like a sore finger) to help healing.

We discovered that the young nettle leaves can be made into soup and the storyteller showed us how to pick a nettle without being stung. You just have to grab it fearlessly... but just in case, we tied some dock leaves to our sticks because the dock leaf can soothe a nettle sting. Along the river we learned about edible leaves and nibbled fresh young leaves from the lime tree and the nutty tasting hawthorn tree. In the olden days the children called the hawthorn leaves 'bread and cheese' because they made a good snack.

In the afternoon we all went on a massive Spring Treasure Hunt all around the garden and discovered an Iron Age roundhouse, a bog garden, two ponds, a sunken garden, a rose arbor and a hidden corner full of sand – like a garden beach! After a final scavenger hunt searching for tiny beautiful things like little twigs, pretty shaped miniature leaves, small seeds and berries, we spent the rest of the afternoon in a hut in the garden making crazy clay mini beasts.





For a Spring Nature Trail, Treasure Hunt and lots of other great nature inspired activities to do with your family and friends, visit The Woodland

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

Lasting Impressions

It was amazing knowing that lots of plants surround us that are medicinally valuable. It is a really nice and peaceful place and I would like to come here frequently to learn something new and interesting.

Sharada Aie

Making and drinking the juices was great. I learnt a lot about plants, something I have little knowledge about, and it was fascinating to hear the medical implications they have. I also really enjoyed the atmosphere.

Ashkan Zaie

It was very enjoyable and informative. I enjoyed making and trying juice from the plants we had collected. I think we will need to get a juicer to make our own health drinks.

Lesley Watson

I learned about different plants and herbs – I enjoyed processing the juice.

Yasoda Roka





Me and my family enjoyed it a lot. It reminded me of my motherland. I want to learn more information about the plants."

Srijana Sharma

It was definitely an enjoyable experience for my child and me. I enjoyed learning new things such as picking nettles, dandelions and other leaves to make delicious healthy juice.

BS

It was a very enjoyable and useful day for my family. The day was organised very well for both the adults and children. We most enjoyed learning about different types of herbal plants.

Indra Rai

I enjoyed picking the stinging nettles because it was fun. We should love to participate in more events like this.

Bhim Kumari Gharti Magar

I most enjoyed the nettle leaf, green apple and ginger juice tonic because this is helpful for skin.

Saadia Nassim

I saw raspberries in the wood. I found clues for the nature hunt and made a bag to put things in. It was very very good.

William Limbu



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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For more information about the recipes
used in this workshop go to
www.monicawilde.com

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If your group is interested in taking part in a similar project
please contact romena.huq@forestry.gov.scot

[www. forestry.gov.scot/engagement](http://www.forestry.gov.scot/engagement)



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