

Topic Focus

Living things and their habitats, plants and animals and working scientifically.

Overview

The activities in this topic encourage children to see burial grounds as important havens for a range of wildlife. They encourage children to explore different habitats and to view burial grounds from different angles. By investigating mini-beasts, habitats and trees as well as important British species like Hedgehogs, Bumblebees, Lichens and Yew trees the children will use and develop observation and recording skills as well as simple field techniques.

The activities are: Tremendous Trees, Green Guardians, Mini-Beast Mania, Habitat Hunter, Let's Investigate Lichens, Creature Comforts - Hedgehogs, Bumblebees, Slow Worms, Swifts.

EYFS, KS1 & KS2

Key Skills

Investigating
Observing
Questioning
Classifying
Identifying
Recording
Measuring

Key Words

Habitat
Conditions
Mini-beast
Lichen

Curriculum Links

This topic helps develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in Science, Geography, and PSHE.

EYFS

Understanding the World
The World

John Muir Award

Discover

Explore

Conserve

Share



Try the following activities if you are working for any of the following badges:

Rainbows - Look and Learn

Beavers - Explore Activity

Brownies - Environment, Friend to Animals, Science Investigator, Seasons, Wildlife

Cubs - Naturalist Activity

Guides - Animal Active, Science

Scouts - Naturalist Activity, Global Conservation Activity

Green Guardians

The suggested activities give children an opportunity to explore and be inspired by the oldest thing in the burial ground – the Yew tree. They encourage children to express their personal feelings towards them. Children also learn fun and interesting facts and the odd Yew tree myth along the way. You can look at the Ancient Yew Group website www.ancient-yew.org to see if there is an ancient Yew tree in your burial ground or in a site nearby.

Learning Outcomes

Children will:

- Identify and name the Yew tree

Resources

Post-its/paper, collection bag or tub

[Yew Tree Fascinating Fact File](#)

[Something Special Senses Template](#)

[Yew Tree Writing Frame](#)

Key Questions

Why are so many Yew trees found in burial grounds?

Why are there so many myths about Yew trees?

Introduction

Gather together around a Yew tree in the burial ground and share some interesting facts about them with the children using the information in this pack. Ask the children to talk together about the Yew tree and use all of their senses to describe it. Children could fill the [something special senses](#) template with their ideas.

Children write down one word on a post-it or piece of paper to best describe the Yew tree or their feelings about it. Collect the words into a bag and explain that they will be used for writing projects in the classroom. This could be extended to encourage children to write down similes or metaphors.

Activity Ideas

1. Share - stories and poems about the folklore of the Yewtree.

2. Explore - give children the opportunity to explore the tree – taking photographs and sketches from many different angles and positions.

Plenary

Can children invent their own story to share about why the ancient Yew tree is there and what it has seen during its life?

Back at School

Exciting Writing

- Using the words, photographs and sketches gathered in the field create a whole class acrostic poem about the 'Yew Tree' to include all the things they have found out about them.
- Write a folklore story with the Yew tree at the centre. The Yew tree could be the setting or the main character.

BBC Class Clips (www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips) has several short clips about the Yew tree that could be shared in the classroom.





Fascinating Facts

Sacred Yews

Three quarters of British ancient Yews are found in burial grounds.

Long bow mania!

For 300 years yew trees across Europe were felled on a massive scale.
Why?

To make longbows!

Yew tree wood was highly valued in the making of these weapons of war.

In Medieval times many Yews were removed from the countryside
because the leaves are poisonous to animals.

More recently the majority of Yew trees in North America and Asia have
been destroyed for the anti-cancer compounds that are found in the bark.

Yew trees in churchyards survived.

Seed dispersal

The Yew tree seed is poisonous and is found inside a red berry.

The berries are red to attract birds to eat them including starling,
song thrush, mistle thrush, jay, pheasant, blackbird and robin.

Birds vomit the seeds or they pass them intact through
their digestive tract.

This process removes the red berry and also
disperses the seeds - ready to grow.

Did you know?

Some Yews are thought to be as old as the pyramids!

In a churchyard the Yew may well be the oldest thing there.

Some of the early monks in Wales & Ireland lived in hollow Yew trees,
which served as home and shelter as well as a place of worship.

The Yew was the original Christmas tree in Switzerland and Germany.

Wow! Yew trees are special!

You can find information about your local Yew tree at
www.ancient-yew.org .

SOMETHING SPECIAL



