

Springtime activities



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Springtime activities



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Introduction

Is Spring your favourite season? It's the time of year when, after the cold and perhaps snowy conditions of winter, everything starts to come alive again. We are reminded that the year is a cycle of activity and this is the ideal time to get outdoors and start to explore, to investigate and to get active! Even with the COVID-19 situation, we can get out into the garden, if we are lucky enough to have one, or take a walk—following government guidelines.

So let's all celebrate Spring whether by making feeders to help the birds as they feed their young, by making the delicious Spring risotto on page 14 to feed ourselves or taking a healthy Spring walk to see what you can spot in the fields and hedges.



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Spring weather

Whether at home or at school, children can follow trends in the weather during the season.

Recording equipment such as rain gauges can be purchased quite cheaply or even made.

How to make a simple rain gauge

- Cut the top section from a clear plastic drinks bottle.
- Add some stones to the bottom section of the bottle.
- Turn the top upside down and place into the lower section. Tape it in place thereby providing a funnel into the lower section.
- Mark a scale on the bottle using a ruler and permanent marker.
- Place the gauge outside where it will catch the rain which can then be measured.

By recording the daily temperature and precipitation, children can see the season changing. They can notice the temperature when the bulbs come through, when flower buds start to open or birds start collecting nesting material.

This is fascinating data to collect year on year so children can begin to make comparative studies and thereby embark on an interest in meteorology.

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A year on the farm



Livestock
(cattle and sheep)

A year on the farm

Take a look at some typical farming activities during the seasons

Spring March April May	Summer June July August	Autumn September October November	Winter December January February
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Lambing● Cows are vaccinated and wormed. They are also scanned to see if they are pregnant● Any livestock that were housed for the winter are let out into fields to eat grass● Beef cows born in autumn are sent to market (spring calves are normally sent to market during the winter)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Sheep are sheared to keep them cool during the summer● The wool is sent to the market● Some of the lambs are weighed and the heavy ones sent to market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Remaining lambs are weighed and sent to market● A few females are kept for breeding purposes● Ewes (female sheep) & rams (male sheep) are mated for birth of lambs in spring● Calving for beef cows (cows mated in early summer will calve in spring)● Some cattle and sheep are moved indoors for winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Female sheep are scanned to see if they are pregnant, wormed & vaccinated before lambing● All animals are fed winter feed including silage and hay made earlier in year● Cows are mated for autumn calving (on some farms they are mated early in the summer for spring calving)

Download this poster from <http://www.whyfarmingmatters.co.uk/classroom-posters> and find out what jobs there are to be done on the farm in Spring—and all year round.

Watch the videos on the site to hear from a variety of farmers about their work and why they love it.

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Make a pumpkin bird feeder

food for you and for the birds!

Birds are very busy at this time of year building their nests and raising their young. Encourage birds into the garden or playground by providing a variety of feeders. On the next page you can find out how to make a bird feeder using a pumpkin or other vegetable squash.



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Make a pumpkin bird feeder

food for you and for the birds!

You will need:

A small pumpkin or other round shaped vegetable squash

String or twine – uncoloured garden jute twine works well

Bird food – seeds, fat ball, scraps etc.

Tools:

Sharp knife (for adult use), metal spoon or similar shape scoop, scissors

The pumpkin

Halve the pumpkin round its 'waist' making a top half and bottom half.

Scoop out the seeds and some flesh and set flesh aside for cooking (soup, roast or pie filling; you could also save some of the seeds for planting next spring).

Leave enough of the flesh to keep the outer skin firm - about 0.5-1.00cm thick.

Use the knife tip to cut small drainage holes in the base of each pumpkin half.

The string hangers

Cut 6 lengths of the twine – about 1.25m each.

Plait the twine to make two strings to hang the pumpkin.

It is easiest to do this tying the starter knot to a chair, door handle or similar.

Children might need help learning to plait!

Completing the bird feeder

Tie the strings together at their centres to make a cradle for the pumpkin half.

Some extra twine tied round the pumpkin and joining the strings together helps to secure the feeder.

Fill with the bird food, hang up and wait and watch!

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More bird feeders

A simpler—and probably messier - activity to make bird feeders involves using pine cones, bird seed, string and lard or vegetable fat.

Tie a piece of wool to the cone to make a loop to hang it from.
Push lard/fat into the pine cone and press the bird seed into the lard.

To speed things up you can have the lard and seeds ready mixed together so the children just squish the mixture into the cone.

Watch out for children with wheat allergies!

This is a messy activity; you will need warm water, soap and paper towels to wash hands.



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Plant a shoe

Use old shoes/trainers/wellies for this activity. Make sure they are worn out, out-grown or ready to be discarded! You are going to use the footwear instead of plant pots.

An adult should punch some holes in the sole for drainage.

Provide some gravel for children to put in the shoe for more drainage and then fill with compost. Gardening gloves can be made available for children who are not yet keen to get their hands dirty.

Small plants can then be potted up with spring flowers, summer bulbs or herbs. These can be left outside and watered sparingly. Encourage children to group the footwear to make an attractive display.



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Create a minibeast home

Homes for insects are very popular—and quite expensive—in garden centres but children can make their own and enjoy discovering the creatures that inhabit them.

Choose a sheltered site in your garden. Use a variety of materials - old bricks, wooden crates or pallets, plant pots and small logs. These and other materials can be used to construct a minibeast shelter. Adult help will be needed to make sure the construction is safe and that children handle the materials with care. Be careful to look out for sharp edges, nails etc. Gloves are useful to prevent splinters etc.

Gaps can be stuffed with newspaper, cardboard and sticks.

Children can take turns to observe the minibeast home and to see how soon it becomes occupied by snails, centipedes, beetles and slugs. There are opportunities to record observations on graphs or bar charts.



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Go on a Spring walk

Plan a walk in your garden/local park or green space (sticking to government guidelines) where children can spot and identify flowers growing, buds breaking, frogspawn, birds nesting or other signs of Spring.



Children can capture photos of the things they find to help create a book or display when they return home. Alternatively, prepare an I-spy sheet for the children in advance by taking photos yourself (ideally when you are planning the route).

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Treasures of Spring

Children love collecting things. This activity combines the attraction of a treasure hunt with an incentive to use descriptive words. The only materials you need to supply are empty egg boxes.

On their Spring walk children find six objects to store in the egg box. Talk to the children in advance about health and safety and the kinds of things they should be looking for or avoiding. Do not encourage them to pick flowers but to look for items on the ground such as leaves, pebbles and feathers. On return home, children are encouraged to talk about their treasured items. What words can they find to describe the items? Make a word list of the adjectives used.



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Spring green vegetable orzo risotto

Our friend James Holden of the Royal Academy of Culinary Arts – Chefs Adopt a School has provided a Springtime recipe that anyone can try.

300g dried orzo pasta
250g asparagus, trimmed
100g baby spinach
100g frozen peas
300ml vegetable stock
100ml low fat crème fraiche
300g fresh or frozen broad beans, podded
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Low-calorie cooking spray
3 sticks celery –peeled and finely diced
8 spring onions, thinly sliced
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 red chillies, deseeded and finely chopped
50g fresh parmesan (or vegetarian alternative), finely grated method

Cook the orzo according to the packet instructions, then drain. Cut the tips off the asparagus and set aside. Put the stems in a large pan with the peas and stock and cook over a high heat for 5 minutes, then add the spinach and cook for 1 more minute. Transfer to a food processor and blend until fairly smooth. Add the crème fraiche and mix in thoroughly.

In a separate pan, boil the asparagus tips and broad beans in lightly salted water for 2-3 minutes. Drain and set aside. Place a large frying pan sprayed with low calorie cooking spray over a medium heat. Add the spring onions, garlic, chopped celery and half the chillies, stir-fry for 1 minute. Turn the heat to high, add the orzo and the veg purée and stir-fry for 3-4 minutes, or until piping hot. Stir in the asparagus tips, beans and half the parmesan and cook for 1-2 minutes.

Serve sprinkled with the remaining chilli and parmesan and a twist of pepper.

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More ideas!

Suggestions below are all free to download

Wildlife spotting sheets

<https://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/resources/705>

Signs of Spring PowerPoint

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/spring-6039769>

Colourful Spring words and pictures for classroom displays

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/spring-time-display-pack-3005152>

Dominoes with a Spring theme

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/spring-time-dominoes-3005229>

There are masses of activity sheets and other resources on the Times Educational Supplement resources and Countryside Classroom sites.

Recommended reading: The Children's Garden by Matthew Appleby

Thank you members of the LEAF Education team for many of the ideas in this e-booklet.