

Springtime activities



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!

This is one of LEAF Education's seasonal e-booklets bringing together a variety of ideas to inspire teachers and their pupils or farmers and their visitors to make the most of the outdoors.

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

Within schools, children can follow trends in the weather during the season. On a farm or other setting where different pupils are present each day, observation and recording can still form a part of the day's activities.

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 pupils can begin to make comparative studies and thereby embark on an interest in meteorology.

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Lambing visits

For a lucky few, Spring will offer the opportunity to bottle feed an orphan lamb and marvel at its extraordinary strength as it pulls greedily on the bottle, and everyone who visits will encounter unfamiliar sights, sounds, smells and sensations on the day. These experiences are not only enjoyable, but they are also incredibly valuable to children who are learning to make sense of the world around them.

To find a farm with lambs to see, try www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk and see Places to Visit or contact your LEAF Education regional consultants here: <https://education.leafuk.org/regional-education-consultants>

Capitalise on the lingering excitement of your visit with these follow-up activities for the classroom.

1. In **English**, practise spellings of the unfamiliar and irregular words you have encountered on your visit, such as ewe, lamb and wool.
2. In **Art**, try your hand at felt-making – it's easier than you think. Download this resource to get started: <https://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/resources/847>
3. In **Science**, learn about selective breeding for different qualities. How did farmers of the past develop different breeds for different purposes, such as wool or meat production?
4. In **PSHE**, look at what food and conditions lambs need to be healthy. How is this similar or different to what children need?
5. In **Maths**, investigate how quickly lambs grow by measuring their size and weight at different ages. Ask the farmer to help you collect the data during your visit.

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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 <https://visitmyfarm.org/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.

Why not invite a farmer or grower into school to answer questions about what happens on the farm in Spring and how a farmer's work has a direct impact on the food we eat?

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Bird feeder

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. In our Pumpkin Activities booklet we showed how to make a feeder from a pumpkin.

<http://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/resources/904>



Find out from the RSPB how to open a bird café!

<http://bit.ly/1kzShY1>

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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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Hedgerow Birds Game

Fitting in with the importance of feeding birds in the Spring, this is a fun way which also introduces the concepts of camouflage, food chains, predator prey relationships and the importance of habitat management to support food chains.

What do you need in advance?

- Some pipe cleaners to be worms/caterpillars (some bright colours, others browns and greens.)
- A nearby hedge.

Split the group into two teams and stand them by the hedge. Explain that they are little birds that live in the hedgerow. Scatter the “caterpillars” about 10m from the hedge, making sure they are well spread out.

The teams then have a relay race: one child runs out, grabs a caterpillar and runs back; the next team member goes and so on, until one team wins. You should find that the brightly coloured caterpillars have been “eaten” more than the camouflaged ones.

Replace the caterpillars and run the race again, this time with a sparrowhawk to catch the sparrows as they fly out of the hedge. When a child is tagged by the sparrowhawk, they drop out of the game and their next team member goes.

Caterpillars could be hidden in the hedge to change the game. Hanging up all the captured caterpillars in a line would show the colour variations clearly.

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Plant a shoe

Ask children to bring in old shoes/trainers/wellies. Make sure they are worn out, outgrown 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 grounds. 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. 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 area/on the farm 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 to the classroom. 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 to the classroom, children are encouraged to talk to a friend about their treasured items. What words can they find to describe the items? Make a word wall of the adjectives used.



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 fraîche
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 fraîche 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!

Wildlife spotting sheets

<http://www.countrysideclassroom.org.uk/resources/view?id=705>

Spot Spring flowers

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/plants/wild-flowers/>

Looking for leaves

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/48345/leaf-id-sheet.pdf>

Spotting birds

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/animals/birds/>

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 team for many of the ideas in this e-booklet.