



# Little Explorer

Greater Manchester  
**Walking**

## December Nature Walks for under 5's

Welcome to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 4 Little Explorer Packs, filled with ideas for using nature to keep healthy. Walking is a fantastic activity for families with young children. It's free, you can do it just about anytime and anywhere and, with so much space and nature to enjoy along the way, we can all still have fun whilst keeping our social distance and staying safe during the next few months. The activities are designed for doing on a walk in your local area or for when you get back home. But remember, it's important to look after yourselves and also nature. Here are tips to follow:

- Before going for a walk, **check the weather** to help decide where to go and what to wear.
- While you are walking, identify and **avoid touching** plants such as stinging nettles, foxgloves and fungi that may cause skin irritation, illness, etc.
- Carefully pick **only a single leaf or small sprig** so as not to damage the rest of the plant.
- **Never taste** or put any parts of **wild plants** near your mouth. Eating outside is fun but some berries and plants can be poisonous so stay safe and take a picnic with you instead.
- **Always wash hands** after you have been handling natural objects

**December** is the first month of Winter. Luckily there are some plants that keep their leaves and continue to grow even in cold weather. These provide vital year-round shelter and food for wildlife. This month's walk activities will explore the special properties of **Evergreen & Conifers**.

### Woodland Wand Walk

Make a magical wand from evergreen leaves. Here are 3 of common UK species to look out for:



**What you need?** **HOLLY**

**SCOT'S PINE**

**IVY**

- 4 - 6 coloured pipe cleaners, cut into approx. 10cm lengths. You can also use wool though tying knots with cold fingers can be tricky!

#### What to do?

- The first thing to find on your walk is a stick. Check it is straight and strong but not too long for waving - about as thick as your thumb & as long as from your elbow to finger tips usually works well.
- Now start collecting evergreens but remember these are still growing so only pick a small sprig so as not to damage the rest of the plant.
- Use pipe cleaner to attach to your stick. Twist and twizzle it as tight as you can. Ivy is great for winding all along your wand.
- Give your wand a bit of extra magic by adding any pine cones and feathers you find on your walk and shiny ribbon if you have some.



This activity resource pack has been produced by NatureEd CIC  
with funding from the Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation. For more details see: [www.NatureEd.co.uk](http://www.NatureEd.co.uk)

## Exploring Evergreens

Evergreens have special leaves to help protect them from the winter weather. Gardeners often grow them, not just for their colour, but also for their amazing shapes and textures. Many originally came from other parts of the world. Try finding these in one of Rochdale's 10 Green Flag Parks: [www.rochdale.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/parks-and-countryside](http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/parks-and-countryside)



**LAUREL**



**CYPRESS**



**SPRUCE**

- Do some sorting into different shapes and textures. Here are some words which might help: **Rounded, Prickly, Pointed, Spikey, Long, Feathery, Thick, Rough, Smooth, Waxy, Glossy**

## Festive Decorations

Evergreens are often seen as a symbol of life and have been used to celebrate winter festivals for thousands of years. Find out more from this website: [www.whychristmas.com/customs/trees.shtml](http://www.whychristmas.com/customs/trees.shtml)

**Tree Dressing Day** is Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December. Join communities around the world celebrating trees by making some of these eco-friendly ice decorations to say 'thank you' to the trees where you live



### What you need?

- Different shaped tubs / ice lolly moulds, natural string/ rafia, water & a freezer or a very cold night!

### What to do?

- Tie some string to your sprig of evergreen then place in tub, fill with water and freeze until it is solid ice.
- Run warm water over your ice decoration to loosen then hang outside and watch it slowly melt away.

**Winter Solstice** is Monday 21<sup>st</sup> December – the "shortest" day of the year. Use evergreens to make these salt dough decorations and bring good luck into your home for the coming year.

### What you need?

- Salt dough, greaseproof paper, rolling pin, different shaped cutters, wool. Food colouring, metallic pens/ paint, glitter & varnish will add extra bling!

### What to do?

- Make your salt dough [www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/how-make-salt-dough-recipe](http://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/how-make-salt-dough-recipe)
- Roll dough on the paper until 0.5cm thick. Place sprigs of evergreens on top & gently roll again so they either stick in the dough or at least leave a pattern.
- Use the cutter to make the outline of your decoration. Try different shapes.
- Use a twig to make a small hole near the edge – this is for your wool.
- To dry: bake in a cool oven for 3 hours or leave in sunny spot for 2 – 3 days.
- Once dry, add glitter, varnish, etc. then thread with wool & tie in a loop.

If you want to have a go at another festive challenge, then check out this link: [www.treetoolsforschools.org.uk/activities/pdfs/pdf\\_christmas\\_hunt.pdf](http://www.treetoolsforschools.org.uk/activities/pdfs/pdf_christmas_hunt.pdf)



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## Wildlife Wander

Each month, we'll look out some of Rochdale's amazing wildlife but remember, spotting animals can be tricky. This month we are looking out for footprints animals leave behind. Seeing tracks in crisp white snow is magical but mud is also great for showing who's been there before you.

- Can you match the prints in the snow to the animal who made them? Look carefully at the shape of the feet as they will help you. Tick any you see while on your Wildlife Wander.



- You can check out if any wildlife is wandering into your garden or back yard by making a footprint tunnel using this link: [www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/how-to-make-a-footprint-tunnel.html](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/how-to-make-a-footprint-tunnel.html)

## Snow Sculptures

Why not make your own snow prints or even animals? Don't forget to wear lots of warm clothes!

### Snow Angels

- Lie on your back in the snow
- Move your legs wide apart then back together & your arms above your shoulders then down by your side.
- See the pattern you leave.



### Snow Animals

- Create shapes from the snow – round bodies, pointy noses, long ears.
- Use sticks & stones to add spines, feelers, eyes.
- Don't forget to give your Snow Animal a name!



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## Little Explorer Nature Walk Diary

Keeping a diary of your walks is a great reminder of where you've been and what you've seen. It's also something for showing friends and family who you aren't able to meet up with at the moment. By sharing it on Facebook, you might even inspire them to become a *Little Explorer* too!

Here are some things to make a note of in your diary and there's also a picture frame for you to add drawings or photographs as special memories of the walks and activities you've done.

Can you count how many walks you have been on this month .....

How long did the longest walk take? .....

Where was your favourite walk to? .....

.....

Why was it the best? .....

.....

Draw a picture or stick on a photograph in the frame below

