

Look up, Look Down: Exploring the tree canopy and the world of tiny things at our feet.
Age range: 4- 7 yr. olds

Curriculum links:

Living things-Plants and animals in their environment

Skills

Investigating and observing and recording.

Setting the Scene

Plants can grow nearly everywhere on earth- from the towering tree canopies of tropical rainforests to tight crevices in cold, windswept mountain ranges. From the peat bogs of Donegal to the windowsills of Dublin, plants, of all shapes and sizes, can be found.

Equipment

Basic rectangular mirrors of 10cm by 7.5cm.

Small squares of card

Double sided tape

Preparation

Prepare 'petal palettes' for collecting small plant parts found on the ground by placing a square of double-sided tape in the centre of the card. Do not peel off the top layer until children are ready to go out and collect plant materials.

Before collecting make clear to children that it is a collection of plant materials *found on the ground not picked off living plants.*

Time span

These activities can be done throughout the year.

Activity 1

Place mirror on bridge of nose standing under a group of trees, slowly move in a semi-circle in the same spot while looking at the image in the mirror. Children should experience a strong visual sense of the tree canopy above by doing this activity.

Activity 2

Collect small fallen flowers, parts of leaves and twigs from the ground. Place them on the sticky part of the collecting card and display them back in the classroom.

Trigger Questions

Shareable Resource for DPS Web Site

For Activity 1

Ask children to describe what they saw in the mirror.

For Activity 2

Discuss what plant parts have been found and if there is any evidence of herbivores (plant eaters) this would make a good link to The Hungry Caterpillar story for younger primary age range. For older children both activities could stimulate a discussion around the inter-relationships between animals and plants. For example with the tree canopy, if you are a bird, where would be a good place to nest? Were there signs of herbivores on the leaves they found?

Ask if these activities had been done in another season what might be different about the things they saw and found. This could lead on to a discussion about the impacts of seasonal change and what plants need to grow and survive. It could also lead on to the topic of climate change and how a warmer planet will impact on plant life.

Development of activity

Make a giant plant collage in your classroom. Visit a local garden or park to experience these activities with more diverse plant collections and take the opportunity to ask questions of the gardeners or rangers.

Safety

Explain to children not to pick up berries, as they can often be poisonous and the importance of washing hands afterwards.

Review

Plants are often made invisible or overlooked in modern life. Keep children engaged with the importance of conserving plants by asking them what plants did they eat for breakfast? And are they wearing plants today?

Assessment and follow up activities

Younger children can be asked to talk through their petal palettes or their experience of the mirroring trees activity. Older children can design a poster demonstrating the important role plants play in both animal and human lives.

Teachers can take digital images to record the activities to create a short slide show and ask children to respond to the images in terms of what they have learnt about the plant diversity. This could then extend for older primary children into a discussion on conserving plants.