

# Nature's treasure basket

Free and low-cost activity ideas using natural and recycled resources and the outdoors



**JUNK MONSTERS:** Do you have any cardboard tubes or boxes lying around the house? Why not make some junk monsters?

First, encourage your little one to find and sort some reusable items from your recycling: boxes, tubes, containers, bits and bobs. Try to find things that are different sizes and colours.

Then have fun looking, thinking, joining, sticking, cutting, gluing, painting, decorating, balancing, twisting and turning. What fantastical junk creature has your little one created?

You can also find more fun recycling ideas [here](#) (with thanks to the [Royal Academy](#) for the photo and inspiration)

**NATURE WANDS:** When is a stick not a stick? When it's a nature wand! All you need to do when you are out and about is to remember to take a roll of sticky tape with you.

Once THE stick has been found, wind some tape (sticky side out) around it. Then once your wands have enough tape wrapped around them, begin collecting nature treasures by pressing them to the sticky tape: feathers, leaves, flowers, seeds, grass, pebbles. Before long you'll have a beautiful nature wand! (With thanks to [SunHatsAndWellieBoots](#) for the lovely idea).

**NATURE ART:** When you're next out for a walk, why not collect a range of different-sized leaves, twigs and flower petals? You'll be amazed how easily these items can be made into the most effective works of art!

Why not try this simple leaf/twig butterfly? If you don't have paints, use the colourful petals you've collected to decorate the butterfly's wings. No glue? Simply place the natural items onto a piece of paper.

(With thanks to Aliex from [happywildones](#) and [thimbleandtwig.com](#) for the image).



**NATURE BRACELET:** Next time you're out for a walk, try making a nature crown or bracelet: it's really simple and fun.

Cut out a piece of card (perhaps from an empty cereal packet) the right size for your little one's head or wrist. Join the ends together to make a crown or bracelet. Cover the card in double-sided sticky tape, or if you don't have that, just use bits of normal sticky tape formed into loops.

Then when you're out and about on your walk, let your child collect small pieces of nature to stick on it (like small sticks, leaves and flowers). When you get home, you can talk about what you've collected (*with thanks to [The Ladybird's Adventures](#) for this idea*).



**WEAVING:** Why not get your little one's fingers moving and create some amazing weavings?

All you need is a wire rack (the one from your oven works well for little fingers) some plastic bags, a pair of scissors and you're ready to go!

To turn the bags into long strips for threading, first cut the handles off. Then take a bag, roll it over and over as shown in the photo, and snip it into little strips. Give the strips a shake and hey presto, they're ready for your little one to thread in and out. Old fabric or ribbons work well too.



**COLOUR WALK:** All you need is a small box or bag to collect things in, and some paint charts (optional).

Get some free paint colour charts from your local DIY store – or you draw your own chart using pens or crayons – and take them out for a walk, trying to find objects that match the colours on your way.

This can be made very simple for the youngest children with just one or two colours to match, or more sophisticated for older children as you try to match different shades of green or yellow.



**SEE AND HEAR BINGO:** All you need is a list of items to find – this can be written on the back of a cereal packet. Plan in advance the things you might see and hear on your walk – this can be done in the park, the woods, and along your local street.

‘Collect’ different sounds such as birds singing, dogs barking, leaves rustling, the noise of water, a car horn or a fire engine siren; and different sights such as a red leaf, a yellow flower, a spider’s web, a puddle, a cloud, a post box, a red bus or a blue car...

For older children, the words on a list will do. For younger children, find a picture – in a magazine, on junk mail, a catalogue (you can get free catalogues from many shops or sent to you) or downloaded from the internet if you have access to a printer. Make your own chart with things you think the children will see or hear in your specific area, or download the many different options on the internet, such as treasure hunts or nature bingo to use instead.

**JOURNEY STICK:** All you need is string or wool. People from many countries use journey sticks to tell the story of their journey to others. Your child could create their own journey stick while on a walk in your local park or woods.

Take some wool or string out with you. Ask your child to look around and find a long stick they like. Tie the wool/string to it, and ask them to add any interesting objects they find on their walk tucked into the string – it might be a strange shaped leaf, a feather, berries or moss. It’s fun to collect, and can be used to tell/recall the walk they went today.



**TRANSIENT ART:** All you need is a bag to collect things. Go on a walk to your local green space. Find stick, pine cones, seed pods, leaves, flowers – anything interesting that is lying around – and a space to create some art: maybe against a tree or a log, or in a natural hollow in the ground.

Make a creature or just something abstract – wherever your child’s imagination takes them, and you can do it too! Do as many as you like in different places.

Leave them for others to find on their walks. You can take photographs of them before leaving so that your child remembers their creation and you can talk about it when you get home and discuss what other children might think if they find them.



**WATERING CAN:** All you need is an old plastic bottle. Put some holes in the lid of a used plastic milk or water bottle and fill it half full with water (or as much as your child can carry easily) – this creates a perfect watering can for your garden or for some easy water play ‘drawing’ on a path or patio.

You can draw flowers or leaves on the bottle too to decorate it as an extra bit of fun.



**BOGGITS** i.e. clay, mud or stone creatures! All you need is glue and a bag to collect things. Ask your child to find some stones, pebbles or a piece of wood in the local park, green space or in your garden if you have one, and some small sticks, leaves, moss, berries and anything else that looks interesting – you might even find some animal fur or some feathers you can use.

Get some glue and put it in a pot, and use some small sticks as glue spreaders. Add the berries as eyes, feathers, leaves and moss as the body and some small sticks or grasses as the legs. You have made a bug!

If you have some clay indoors already, then you can make the boggits out of clay and use the found items to make a creature that way. If you don't have clay, you could make your own using earth and water and packing it into a circular shape (maybe use an old plant pot base or recycled plastic container) and leave it to dry in the sun, and you will have your own special bug!

**NATURAL PAINT, PERFUME or COLLAGE:** Create your own natural red and purple paint from berries crushed in a little water, or brown paint from earth mixed with water.

Make your own paint brushes from small twigs and leaves, and your own perfume from flower petals you have found and mix them with a little warm water in an old jar – roses petals or lavender flowers are especially good for this, or if you have herbs growing in your garden, or have found some wild garlic or similar on your walk, you could use those .

Create natural art pictures with glue and all the exciting leaves, seeds pods, berries and flowers you have found on your journey – you could an abstract picture or make a troll or a woodland creature or a giant!



**MAKING A TROLL AND A TROLL DEN:** *All you need is a bag to collect things, a piece of cardboard from the inside of a kitchen roll or similar, a pen and some thread/wool (optional).*

Gather some short sticks and three long sticks when you are outside. Make this outside or take it home to make.

*Making the troll:* Pierce some holes in the cardboard tube and push the small sticks in to make legs and arms. Use moss or leaves for hair, and draw a face – nice or fierce! – on the cardboard and maybe add some teeth or a large warty nose!

*Making the troll den:* Hold the three larger sticks together and tie some thread or wool round them. If you don't have this, use a long piece of root, vine or similar you have found.

You could then tell stories about the troll who lives there, his family and what he eats – you could make some food from the things you have found too, using a large leaf for a plate.



TROLL DEN