

# WILD PLANT SURVEY



## What you will need

Pencils, pens, paper, several large hoops (1 per group), basic plant identification chart or plant key.

## Preparation

Make sure that there is a range of wild plants growing locally or in the school grounds in different places.

## Introduction

All plants like to grow in certain conditions. For example in the Pancake Wood Challenge, the children discovered how Bluebells like the warmth and shelter provided by the trees and how the violets liked the sunny, warm conditions provided by the open track. If we look in our local environment we can start to spot a number of plants that like certain conditions; a daisy is usually found in open, sunny conditions and mosses are usually found in shady, damp places. Some plants, like thistles and nettles do well on waste or disturbed ground.

## Discussion

Explain to the children that they are going to be wildlife explorers and go outside and investigate wild plant life. You can do this exercise within the school grounds or take them out to a local park, nature reserve or woodland.

First ask the children to name any wild plants they already know; many will be familiar with common plants like daisy,



dandelion, forget me not or buttercup. Use pictures or plant guides to build up their knowledge.

Ask the children to suggest places to survey nearby; they could choose places like the school field, a hedgerow, under trees or amongst tall grass. Discuss with the children what conditions they might see in each place; light, dark, dry or damp?

Next, agree on two areas to survey and write them on the board (e.g. the school field and a wooded area). Explain to the children that the study will focus on these two places. Ask the children to guess what the conditions might be like in these places and what plants they might expect to find growing there?



### Make predictions

Ask the children to make some firm predictions about what they will see. Allow them to form a theory about which plants will be found and how many of each plant will grow in each place? Will there be more plants on the field in the sun than under the trees in the shade? Or less on the field where they get trampled on and more under the trees where they won't get disturbed? Where will they find the most daisies? The most moss? Write the predictions on the board and then go out and do the investigation.

### Investigate

Give each group a hoop, a plant guide, pens, pencils and paper and ask them to record their findings in a table a bit like this:

Plant	School Field	By Trees
Daisy	5	0
Bramble	0	1
Moss	1 patch	3 patches



The children will need to put down their hoop somewhere in the area to be surveyed. Ask the children what would make a fair test? Do they throw the hoop down and see where it lands? Or choose a spot and place it down? Next ask the children to identify all the plants they find inside the hoop using their guides. Make sure they count how many of each plant they find. This could be done by counting the number of flower heads they see or by finding out which flower heads belong to the same plant. For plants like mosses it is best to see how many patches there are.

### Assessment

Bring the children back together to share their findings. All the children should now be able to identify some local wild plants. Ask each group which plants they found and how many were in each place? e.g. How many daisies were on the grass? How many were under the tree? Which plants were found in both habitats? Which in only one? Were the predictions correct? If not, what was different? Did they find new plants? If so what did they find out about them?

Ask the children if they can now make a guess about where certain plants might usually grow? Devise a quiz to test their knowledge by describing a plant and stating where it typically grows; see if the children can guess which one it is.

The children could present their overall findings as a collage or map naming the plants they saw in each place.

