

Lanarkshire Green Health Partnership

19 Ways to Stay Connected with Nature during Covid-19

Here are some suggestions to help you get out in your garden or bring nature indoors!



1. Tree & Plant Identification

What trees can you see from where you are sitting? How many are there? Can you tell what species they might be? It'll be more difficult at some times of the year, but as well as looking at their leaves, the shape of the tree and the colour of the bark can give you some clues. If you are out for a walk you might find some of the fruit or dead leaves under the tree which will give you an even bigger clue.

The Woodland Trust offer a great resource to help you see what trees are in your neighbourhood, in the form of an app that can be downloaded.

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/how-to-identify-trees/>

Check out this great flow chart which helps you tell your oaks from your elders.

<https://www.opalexplorenature.org/sites/default/files/7/file/Tree-Health-Survey-Tree-ID-guide-WEB.pdf>

For identifying plants other than trees, check out the website of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland <https://bsbi.org/identification>

For information about what the BSBI do in Lanarkshire check out <https://bsbi.org/lanarkshire-v-c-77> to sign up for their Lanarkshire Botany Newsletter and find out about their training sessions.

2. Immerse yourself in a book

If you aren't able to get out into nature then how about reading about it. Over on twitter, Robert Macfarlane, one of the most influential contemporary nature writers, is gathering people together in an online bookgroup. <https://twitter.com/RobGMacfarlane/status/1239257966190174208>

Even if you aren't able to join, check out his suggestions of books to read.

Braiding Sweetgrass - Robin Wall Kimmerer

The Living Mountain - Nan Shepherd

Middlemarch - George Eliot

All these are available as books, ebooks & audio, you'll be able to get some from your (online) library too.

For more suggestions of books about nature take a look at The Nature Library <https://www.thenaturelibrary.com/> where you can find their book list as well as their page a day project where they share a page from their shelves.

Read books free online for 30 days on Scribd. https://www.scribd.com/readfree?utm_source=readfree

3. Be a phenologist

Phenology is the study of seasonal changes in plants and animals from year to year, such as flowering of plants, emergence of insects and migration of birds. The Woodland Trust asks volunteers to record the first time in the year they see a particular butterfly or the first leaf appears. Take a look at their Nature's Calendar and the list of species they want to record.

<https://naturescalendar.woodlandtrust.org.uk/what-we-record-and-why/species-we-record/>

4. Cloud Appreciation

If you've got your own garden and the weather is fine, why not get outside, lie on the grass (or a bench) and look at the sky. What clouds can you see? Do you know their names? The Cloud Appreciation Society have an app that will help you identify them and you can even become a member. There are also some wonderful pictures of clouds, including clouds in art and videos from their Sky Gathering with informative sessions on a range of topics.

<https://cloudappreciationsociety.org/>

5. Listen to music that connects you to nature

Try Farewell to Stromness by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies written in the late '70s as a protest against a proposed uranium mine in the Orkney Islands, it totally evokes the peace and tranquillity of being out in nature – with a slightly sinister underlying bass. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpJB-XXE9Xg>

The Moldau, Czech Vltava is symphonic poem by Bohemian composer Bedřich Smetana that evokes the flow of the Vltava River from its source in the mountains of the Bohemian Forest, through the Czech countryside, to the city of Prague. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6kqu2mk-Kw>

If you're missing the sea try Benjamin Britten 4 Sea Interludes. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTd2aXLTA84>

And for some light relief, how about the greatest ever cover version of Wuthering Heights. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FF0VaBxb27w>

If you'd rather just listen to nature sounds then try one of the white noise apps on the internet. Nosili <https://www.noisli.com/> has a range of different sounds, from the forest to the sea, that you can listen to individually or layer up, so you can create your own storm in a forest.

6. Be a tree

One way to keep moving is to start a home yoga practice. From learning tree pose to channelling your inner warrior, there are a whole lot of videos online for people at every level. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVE4XXFFO70>

7. Smells like the outdoors

Smells are great for evoking nature. If you have some essential oils in your house consider making some aromatherapy dough.

Combine a cup of cornflour with a quarter cup of washing up liquid (the less fragrant the better) and add a few drops of your favourite essential oil. You can also add some food colouring here if you'd like to make it a pretty colour. Work in 2 tablespoons of oil, olive oil in particular will help moisturise your hands to help counteract all the handwashing. Keep kneading it, adding more cornflour or liquid as appropriate until you get a soft pliable dough. Store it in a jar or bag to keep it moist; as you play with it the scent is released and will help calm you. Lavender is soothing, eucalyptus aids concentration and tea tree oil will help clear a stuffy nose.

<https://www.nestandglow.com/life/30-second-aromatherapy-stress-dough>

8. Poetry in motion

Read some poems about Spring here.

<https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poems/nature/spring/>

Or you could write your own, check out the Nature Poetry Game from The Sensory Trust. You don't have to play with others, you could just pick 3 words from each category and arrange them to make a poem.

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/creative-activities/poetry-dice.html>

In fact, check out all their free creative activities designed to engage the senses and connect with nature.

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/creative-activities/index.htm>

Haikus are Japanese poems of seventeen syllables that traditionally evoke images of the natural world. They are written in three lines of five, seven, and five syllables.

Why not try and write one yourself?

<https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Nature-Haiku>

9. Colour yourself calm

It is thought that the process of colouring – focusing on something repetitive and relaxing – helps us distance ourselves from life's stresses, resulting in benefits that are similar to meditation, making the colourer feel calmer and happier. There are lots of free sheets online to print off and colour in.

<https://printablefreecoloring.com/drawings/nature/forest/>

10. Bird ID

Can you hear the birds from your house?

Are you able to identify them by their songs?

Check out this online resource to learn about birdsong <https://levparikian.com/index.php/twitter-birdsong-project/> - it includes great information about when you might hear them, descriptions of the sounds they make and fantastic recordings so you can listen and identify your local birds.

If you can't hear the birds from where you are, why not listen online? The RSPB developed Radio Birdsong so that anyone with an internet connection can listen to the birds.

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/let-nature-sing/birdsong-radio/>

It's also available as an app which you can download from the above website.

If you want to be able to identify the birds you can see from your window, the RSPB has a great online resource to help you find out what sort of birds are in residence in your garden or park. Check it out here <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/identify-a-bird/>

11. Feed the birds

You can help the birds in your garden in a variety of ways. As well as feeding the birds, make sure they have a supply of fresh water. (You don't even have to go to the shops for this one.) <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/how-you-can-help-birds/birds-and-water/>

You could probably make some bird feeders from things you already have in the house. Mixing melted fat (suet or lard) onto a mixture of dry ingredients such as seeds, nuts, dried fruit, oatmeal, cheese and cake, using about one third fat to two thirds mixture. Find out the method here:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/recipes/make-a-fat-cake-for-birds>

12. Virtual Walks

Above all, do not lose your desire to walk. Every day I walk myself into a state of well-being and walk away from every illness. I have walked myself into my best thoughts, and I know of no thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it.

Soren Kierkegaard

If you're not able to get outside to go for a walk, why not check out the enormous supply of outdoor videos available on YouTube. Fancy a misty walk in the Scottish countryside?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6HLtXxWQMY>

Of course if you're doing this through the world wide web then you don't have to stay in Scotland. How about a walk on a Hawaiian beach <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOGE7nNkL0Y> Or if you fancy somewhere a little cooler take a trip to

Antarctica. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kreIMXal1hA>

13. Nature in Art

Nature in Art is the world's first museum and art gallery dedicated to fine, decorative and applied art inspired by nature. You can check out their gallery and online collection here: <https://natureinart.org.uk/nature-in-art-collection/selection-of-paintings-at-nature-in-art/> Is art in the outdoors more your thing? Check out these environmental artists <https://mymodernmet.com/environmental-art/> and maybe get inspired to try some in your back garden.

14. Wildlife Photography

Almost all of us have a camera to hand these days in the form of our phones. If you can't get outside to take pictures, perhaps you have a house plant that would like to model for you. How about doing an extreme close up? Need some inspiration? Pictures from the Wildlife

Photographer of the Year exhibition are available in an online gallery <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/visit/wpy/gallery/2019/adult.html>

15. Folding nature

In Japan, the crane is a mystical creature and is believed to live for a thousand years. As a result the crane represents good fortune and longevity and has become a symbol of hope and healing during challenging times.

Ancient Japanese legend promises that anyone who folds a thousand origami cranes will be granted happiness and eternal good luck. Find out how to fold one here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ux1ECrNDZI4>

16. Write it

For centuries, writers have been composing poems that celebrate nature, stories that explore it, and essays that analyze it. Write about your favourite season. Do you have a favourite tree you could describe? Look at a beautiful photograph of nature and write about that.

<http://www.build-creative-writing-ideas.com/free-creative-writing-prompts-nature.html>

Take some inspiration from other writers. Emergence Magazine is an online publication with stories about ecology and connections to the natural world <https://emergencemagazine.org/>

17. Gardening

If you are lucky enough to have a garden you can get out into, there are plenty of tasks that need to be done, even just raking the leaves would be a good start. The Royal Horticultural Society have an online list of what you can be getting on with each month <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/march>

The Garden for Life Forum has a number of resources to support action by gardeners for the benefit of Scotland's biodiversity

<https://www.keepscotlandbeautiful.org/local-environmental-quality/community-projects/garden-for-life/resources/>

18. Potato printing (or celery or carrots or onion...)

We're not advocating food waste but if you can spare half a potato or a stick of celery and some paint, why not get back to your childhood and do some potato printing. If you print onto newspaper or brown paper you could make some wrapping paper. Or cut out some prints and make them into cards. I'm sure a friend or neighbour would appreciate a pretty note right now.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1I-V8R7dTKQ>

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2011/jun/21/how-to-print-with-potatoes>

19. Turning Japanese

Did you know the Japanese have 72 micro seasons? Each one lasts only around 5 days, and each has a wonderfully descriptive name from "grass sprouts, trees bud" to "ice thickens on streams".

<https://www.nippon.com/en/features/h00124/japan%E2%80%99s-72-microseasons.html>

Download an app here <https://www.kurashikata.com/72seasons/> that will prompt you to think about each new season. You could try and describe the Scottish seasons in the same way. I think our current season would be "hail suddenly appears".