

Nature Sensory Tray

Move, play, and learn with animals, colours, and actions from the world of nature.

Let's Play:

Find a cosy spot indoors near a window or outside on a soft blanket. Gently lay babies down on their backs or support them in a seated position, depending on their stage. Set out a tray or basket filled with safe, clean natural treasures like dried leaves, smooth stones, feathers, soft bark, or fresh herbs like mint or rosemary.

Let the babies explore with their senses, watch their eyes track a floating leaf, feel their fingers brush over rough bark or soft petals, and smell the fresh scent of herbs. Describe each object clearly and slowly in Welsh and English; "Dail – leaves... Maen nhw'n feddal – They're soft."

Use simple, rhythmic phrases; "Beth wyt ti'n gweld?" / "What can you see?" - "Teimla hwn – Feel this."

Encourage cooing, reaching, babbling, and joyful interaction. Respond warmly to their movements and sounds; "Waw! Ti'n hoffi hwn!" / "Wow! You like this one!"

What you'll need:

- A soft blanket or mat
- A low tray or shallow basket for exploration
- A selection of safe, clean natural items
- Dried or fresh leaves
- A small cloth bag or scarf for peekaboo-style reveal
- Adult supervision at all times to ensure safe exploration



Early developmental stages



This activity provides opportunities for:

Language Development

- Introduces babies to Welsh vocabulary through repetition, descriptive words, and simple questions (e.g., “Dail – leaves”, “Beth wyt ti’n gweld?” – What can you see?).
- Helps build early listening and sound recognition skills.
- Encourages bilingual exposure in a relaxed, sensory-rich environment.

Cognitive Engagement

- Stimulates curiosity and attention as babies notice colours, textures, shapes, and patterns in natural materials.
- Promotes early categorisation and recognition (e.g., hard/soft, big/small).
- Encourages cause and effect thinking through touch and visual responses (e.g., watching a feather move or a leaf crinkle).

Movement and Sensory Development

- Encourages reaching, grasping, and hand-eye coordination.
- Supports tactile development through varied textures (smooth, rough, soft).
- Enhances visual tracking as objects are moved slowly in front of them.
- Introduces olfactory stimulation through gentle natural scents.

Inclusive Play for All

Nature Sensory Play is naturally inclusive and can be easily adapted for all babies. Use a variety of textures, colours, and scents that reflect different cultures such as herbs, spices, and natural materials familiar to families from Global Majority Backgrounds. For babies with additional learning needs, offer gentler textures (like soft feathers or fabric leaves) and adjust positioning for comfort and access (e.g., side-lying or supported sitting). Respond to each baby’s communication cues such as smiles, sounds and movements and celebrate their individual ways of exploring. Invite families to suggest natural items that are meaningful in their culture, helping to create a rich, personalised sensory experience.

Useful Phrases:

- **Dail** Leaves
- **Blodyn** Flower
- **Pluen** Feather
- **Carreg** Stone
- **Gwyn** White
- **Gwyrdd** Green
- **Melyn** Yellow
- **Beth wyt ti’n gweld?** – What can you see?
- **Beth wyt ti’n arogli?** – What can you smell?
- **Wyt ti’n hoffi hwn?** – Do you like this?

Find It in Nature

Move, play, and learn with animals, colours, and actions from the world of nature.

Let's Play:

Get ready for a gentle adventure! Set up a safe, natural space—this could be a garden, park, or even an indoor tray filled with natural items. Place a few natural objects like leaves, stones or feathers within or just slightly out of reach to encourage movement.

Hold up a natural item and say something like: “Beth yw hwn? Edrycha – carreg!” / “What’s this? Look – a stone!”. Hide the item nearby and encourage the child to crawl or toddle to find it: “Ble mae’r carreg?” / “Where’s the stone?”. Once they find it, respond with excitement and praise: “Da iawn! Ti wedi dod o hyd i’r dail!” / “Well done! You found the leaf!”

Keep it simple and repetitive. You can add sounds or clues to guide them, like rustling the leaves or tapping a stick. This play builds understanding, encourages new words, and supports early problem-solving skills. It’s also perfect for exploring at each child’s own pace.

What you’ll need:

- A safe space to explore
- Natural items like such as leaves (dail), feathers (plu) or pinecones (côn pren) etc.
- A small basket or tray to collect and display items.
- A soft mat or blanket for seated play (if needed)
- Simple labels or picture cards (optional) to support word learning



Growing movers

This activity provides opportunities for:



Language Development

- Introduces and reinforces Welsh and English nature vocabulary (e.g., dail – leaves, carreg – stone).
- Encourages children to respond to simple questions and instructions (“Ble mae’r...?” / “Where’s the...?”).
- Builds confidence with repetition and familiar phrases.



Cognitive Engagement

- Supports memory and recognition as children match items they see to what they hear.
- Promotes early problem-solving and understanding of object permanence (searching for hidden items).
- Sparks curiosity through exploring textures, colours, and shapes.



Movement and Sensory Development

- Encourages crawling, standing, walking, and reaching to find objects.
- Provides rich sensory input through natural textures (soft, rough, smooth) and sounds (crunching leaves, tapping stones).
- Helps refine fine and gross motor skills through grasping, pointing, and manipulating objects.

Inclusive Play for All

This activity can be easily adapted to suit all children. Place natural items within easy reach or bring the objects to them using baskets or trays. Use varied textures and clear contrasts (light/dark, rough/smooth) to suit different sensory needs. Include natural materials and scents familiar from their home cultures (e.g. herbs, spices, dried flowers). Use home languages alongside Welsh and English where possible to promote belonging. Allow children to explore in their own way - whether by looking, touching, listening, or smelling - and celebrate every interaction.

Useful Phrases:

- **Edrycha!** Look!
- **Beth yw hwn?** What’s this?
- **Ble mae’r dail?** Where are the leaves?
- **Dyma’r garreg!** Here’s the stone!
- **Ti eisiau cyffwrdd?** Do you want to touch it?
- **Mae’n feddal.** It’s soft.
- **Mae’n llyfn.** It’s smooth.
- **Mae’n grwn.** It’s round.
- **Da iawn ti!** Well done!
- **Ti’n gallu arogli?** Can you smell it?

Nature Hunt Adventure

Move, play, and learn with animals, colours, and actions from the world of nature.

Let's Play:

Set up a small, inviting space outdoors or create an indoor nature tray filled with interesting natural items like leaves, feathers, pinecones, smooth stones, and flower petals. Choose one item to focus on and name it clearly in both Welsh and English – for example, “Dyma ddail – leaves!” Let your child feel, smell, and explore it with their senses. Then, hide the item slightly – under a cloth, beside a log, or in a basket – and ask, “Ble mae'r carreg?” / “Where's the stone?” Use gestures, facial expressions, and clues like colour or texture to guide them. Encourage your child to crawl, toddle, shuffle, or reach out, depending on their ability and stage of movement, and support them with warm encouragement.

As they search and discover, celebrate their efforts and successes with enthusiastic praise: “Da iawn ti!” – “Well done you!” This kind of positive reinforcement boosts confidence and makes language learning joyful. Talk about how the items feel (“Mae'n feddal – it's soft”), their colours (“Mae'n wyrdd – it's green”), or sounds they might make (“crunch crunch!”). Keep repeating simple Welsh and English words and phrases to help embed understanding through playful repetition.

What you'll need:

- A safe outdoor space or nature-themed indoor tray
- Natural materials: leaves, pinecones, feathers, pebbles, twigs, bark, flowers, etc.
- Small baskets or containers for collecting and hiding items
- Scent jars (herbs, citrus peel, lavender), magnifying glass, or sensory bags



This activity provides opportunities for:



Language Development

- Encourages vocabulary growth through naming and describing natural objects in Welsh and English.
- Repetition of key phrases helps with understanding and retention.
- Children learn to respond to simple questions and instructions, e.g., “Ble mae’r dail?” / “Where are the leaves?”



Cognitive Engagement

- Builds memory and problem-solving as children search for and identify hidden objects.
- Develops matching, sorting, and categorisation skills (e.g., by colour, texture, or shape).
- Encourages curiosity, focus, and sustained attention through playful discovery.
- Links language with real-world sensory experiences, strengthening understanding.



Movement and Sensory Development

- Promotes reaching, crawling, toddling, or walking as children move toward hidden items.
- Enhances fine motor skills through grasping and exploring different textures.
- Stimulates the senses: touch (rough/smooth), sight (shapes/colours), smell (herbs/nature), and sound (crunching leaves).

Inclusive Play for All

This activity is naturally flexible and can be adapted to meet the needs of all children. Use a range of sensory materials that can be explored by touch, sight, or smell, and offer seated or supported positions for children with limited mobility. Provide verbal, visual, and tactile cues to support understanding, and allow plenty of time for children to respond in their own way. Ensure items are accessible at different levels, and adapt the pace to each child’s engagement level. Celebrate all efforts equally and model language in both Welsh and English to reflect and include all children’s cultural and linguistic identities. Using natural materials also offers a neutral and inclusive sensory experience that doesn’t rely on prior knowledge.

Useful Phrases:

- **Ble mae’r dail?** Where are the leaves?
- **Wyt ti’n gallu gweld y garreg?** Can you see the stone?
- **Beth wyt ti wedi ffeindio?** What have you found?
- **Mae’n feddal!** It’s soft!
- **Mae’n garw!** It’s rough!



**Early Years
Wales**
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