

For adults and children in the garden or outdoor space

Wild winter weaving

Natural England wants to give a million children the chance to discover the outdoors. The natural world is a fascinating place to explore and our natural habitats together with the creatures and plants that live there can provide endless sources of fun. From your own back yard to the wilds of our national nature reserves, now is the time to make the most of the outdoors and go wild!

Together with Fiona Danks and Jo Schofield (www.goingwild.net), authors of Nature's Playground, Go Wild and Make it Wild (www.franceslincoln.com), we've produced these fantastic activity sheets to give you plenty of ideas of what you can get up to, what are you waiting for?



The ancient art of willow weaving has been given a new lease of life by sculptors who weave and sculpt using dead or green willow and other bendy woody materials. The beauty of willow is its flexibility – use it for weaving any sculptural form from animals and birds to flowing shapes and architectural structures. Other weaving materials include hazel, ivy and clematis.

What you need

- A sharp knife and some secateurs
- ardening gloves
- A source of sticks and twigs; dead sticks are fine for the frame but green twigs are required for weaving; eg; hazel, willow, birch, clematis, honeysuckle – try to make use of woody materials you are cutting back in the garden anyway.
- Garden wire or twine





Sculpting basics

- A sphere – the basic building block. Make a circle from one length of willow by bending it around and then weaving the ends up and around the circle until they are fixed in place. Make two more circles the same size then push one circle inside another one at right angles, and pull the third one over the top to produce a basic sphere. Try squashing into an oval – perhaps the start of an animal's body like this goose, spider and flying insect. Or fill in the gaps by adding more willow circles to make a more complete ball.
- Plaiting – Push three or four willow rods into the ground then plait them together.
- Binding rods together – Hold several rods together in one hand and then wind another rod around and around to bind them together. Make the binding tight and neat; thread the end down through the middle to complete.
- Weaving – The supports should be about twice the thickness of the weaving rods, as illustrated in this goose tail.

Making a twig sculpture

Using a combination of the above methods, try weaving twigs and climbers to make simple sculptures for the garden – what creatures can you make? How about a butterfly, a spider or a goose? This twig deer began with four sturdy sticks stuck into the ground to make the legs, then green willow, hazel and wild clematis were wound around another stick to make the body.



Use natural materials wherever possible: grasses and lengths of honeysuckle or ivy can be used as binding where necessary. Alternatively use a little garden wire or twine. Although it is not difficult to make simple sculptures, the weaving does require considerable patience and cooperation; this is a good project to work on as a family.

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Safety tips

- Don't let very young children use sharp tools
- Children using knives or secateurs should be supervised at all times