



Find that plant!

This activity will familiarise children and young people with the different growing conditions plants may need, and enable learners to find plants suitable for different spaces and needs. Learners will explore the Royal Horticultural Society's 'Find a plant' online search to filter plants by criteria such as sunlight, soil and plant type. They will also have the opportunity to look for plants suitable for their own school site.

This activity is a great first step to involve young people in choosing the plants that will feature in their Nature Park, after thinking about [ideas for improvement](#) and starting to [plan your project](#).

This activity is suitable for KS3-4 students to complete self-guided once comfortable with the search tool, but KS2 learners or those requiring more support can also explore 'Find a plant' as a group with the activity guided by an educator.

Teaching time

30-45 minutes

Learning outcomes

- Identifying environmental factors that will affect growing conditions of plants
- Understanding that different plants have different needs and can perform different functions/benefits
- Using an online tool to filter and search for plants appropriate for a space or goal

Before starting the activity, it is helpful to have worked together to explore and find out as much information about your outdoor space as you can. The app-based activities like [investigating weather and microclimates](#), [investigating environmental quality](#) and [shade mapping](#) will help you build a picture of your outdoor space. [Mapping the habitats on your site](#) will also let you know what wildlife-friendly spaces you already have, and where more could be created.

Step by step

Explain to learners that you will be using the internet to look for plants suitable for different spaces. Ensure learners have a **'Find that plant!' worksheet** to note down their plant choices – learners can work individually, or in pairs or groups. Alternatively, you may wish to work through the activity as a class and make the plant choices together. Learners will need to have access to computers with internet connection to use the online tool. The web address for the tool is rhs.org.uk/plants - then click on *Find a plant*. Give learners a few minutes to explore and get used to the tool and what different buttons and menus will do.

Share the **'How to use RHS Find a plant' Powerpoint**. This can be shown at the front of the class as a step-by-step guide, or printed out for older learners to follow as they work their way through the tool. Once learners are familiar with how to use the tool, they can work through the prompts on their worksheets to find plants suitable for the different scenarios.

Green Skills



Suitable for

Key Stage 2

Key Stage 3

Key Stage 4

Location

Indoors

Outdoors

Season

Spring

Summer

Autumn

Winter

What you'll need

Access to devices with internet connection (the site is best viewed on a computer rather than a tablet)

Projector or screen to display the step-by-step guide / web tool
'How to use RHS Find a plant'
Powerpoint

'Find that plant!' worksheets, one per pair, group or person

Key vocabulary

Names of plants

Growing conditions: soil type, sunlight, shade

Support and extension opportunities

Following on from the reflection discussion, you could start to create a 'wish list' of plants that were popular choices in the group, or the sorts of features you'd like your plants to have.

[Design a plant](#) introduces the different functions that plants' features can have – can children and young people design a plant that performs a role for the environment? Can they find a similar existing plant that could be helpful in your Nature Park?



Step by step (continued)

After learners have found plants for the three prompts, the final section of the worksheet asks them to find plants suitable for their own outdoor space. To remind learners of what they've already discovered, refer back to findings you've made about your site or previous activities completed.

It may help to walk around your outdoor space or spend a few minutes in the area you are looking to improve, and discuss what the space is like and what types of plants learners think might work there. (Big plants or small plants? A few plants or lots of plants? Trees? Flowers? Climbing plants?)

If you can get outside, you could try [this soil texture test from Campaign for School Gardening](#) to identify what type of soil you have in your outdoor space. Learners can then use their findings to identify soil type when using the online tool. See 'More information' below for handy definitions of each soil type to help.

Back inside, ask learners to complete the final prompts on the worksheet to find plants suitable for their outdoor space. This can be worked through together as a group/class, or individually before sharing everyone's findings.

Reflection

Invite learners to share which plants they found for their Nature Park – why did you choose those plants? (Did you like the colour, the shape of the leaves or flowers?) Were any plants popular choices across the group?

More information: Soil types

Clay soil has very small particles which stick together and attract water to form large sticky lumps which are heavy to work with. These soils drain slowly and are rich in plant nutrients. Clay soils are easily compacted when trodden on while wet and they bake hard in summer.

Sandy soil has larger particles which do not stick together meaning that sandy soils are light and free draining - the soil will feel gritty. Because of this sandy soils are low in plant nutrients and dry out quickly.

Loamy soil is a mixture of clay and sand, combining the benefits of both soils. Loamy soils are fertile and well drained.

Chalky soil is often stony and free draining, and will include chalk or limestone. Chalky soils can get very dry in summer and are often poor in nutrients.



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