



Nature Walk & Tea Party

Age: 5+ years **Duration:** 30 minutes

This is a lovely gentle activity showing participants the bounty of nature, exploring the world around us, and highlighting a direct connection with nature and the source of all our food.

Materials:

- A thermos flask (≥ 1 litre) full of freshly boiled water
- Small cups (one for each participant)
- Rubber gloves
- A pair of scissors



Directions:

- Decide what kind of 'wild tea' you would like to make. The easiest options are probably Bramble Leaf- tip or Nettle.
- Go on a plant hunt with your class; spring and summer are the best times! Ask everyone to look for the nettles or a bramble/blackberry bush.
- Once you have found a patch that you are happy with* (see below), get the group to gather around, and watch you harvest the leaves.
- Using rubber gloves collect 2 handfuls of leaves from your plant of choice*



**Select the tops of young (lighter colour and more tender) stems from a sheltered wild spot. Ideally picking the tallest tips of plants, away from path edges to ensure no dogs have*

marked their territory boundary there! Also make sure you know the area and are sure that the plants have not been exposed to car fumes, pesticides or weed-killer. Any wild area away from a path is likely to be perfect!

- Carefully add leaves to the flask's hot water. Allow to infuse (and to cool) for 4-5 minutes.



Some interesting questions to ask about nettles:

- *"Why do nettle plants have a sting?"* ANS: To keep people and other animals away; it keeps them safe.
- *"Why are nettles good for people?"* ANS: Nettle soup is really high in Vitamin C and Iron.
- *"Do you know any animals that lay their eggs on the nettle plant?"* ANS: The Tortoiseshell and other Butterflies. Their babies (caterpillars) need to eat the nettles to get energy.

Or



Some interesting questions about bramble/blackberry :

- *"Why do you think bramble/blackberry plants have thorns?"* ANS: So they are not grazed easily by animals such as deer, goats or rabbits.
- *"Why are blackberries good for people?"* ANS: they are really high in Vitamin C.
- *"Do you know any animals that might like to eat parts of the bramble/blackberry plant?"* ANS: Some birds eat the young buds on the plant before they flower, for example the Bullfinch. Bumblebees, honeybees and butterflies love the sweet nectar which is found in the flowers (May through to September). Lots of different birds also love to eat the berries in the Autumn, for example the Blackbirds.

- Pour a small quantity of the tea (strain the leaves) for everyone to enjoy! Why not have a snack to make a wee picnic with your tea!?
- Mint leaves from your school garden are another great option if you have them. A mint and nettle combination is really delicious!

NB: Remember NEVER eat something unless you are 100% sure it is edible.

Learn more about nettles here:

www.wildflowersofireland.net/plant_detail.php?id_flower=184

Learn more about brambles/blackberry bush here:

www.wildflowersofireland.net/plant_detail.php?id_flower=33#glos

Extensions:

- Before, during or after the 'plant hunt' carry out one of the wildlife observation activities by the UK's Woodland Trust:
www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/naturedetectives/
- The 'Sound Mapping' outdoor activity on the Green-Schools Website, in Biodiversity 'Resources' section, is also great with any age group: www.greenschoolsireland.org/

