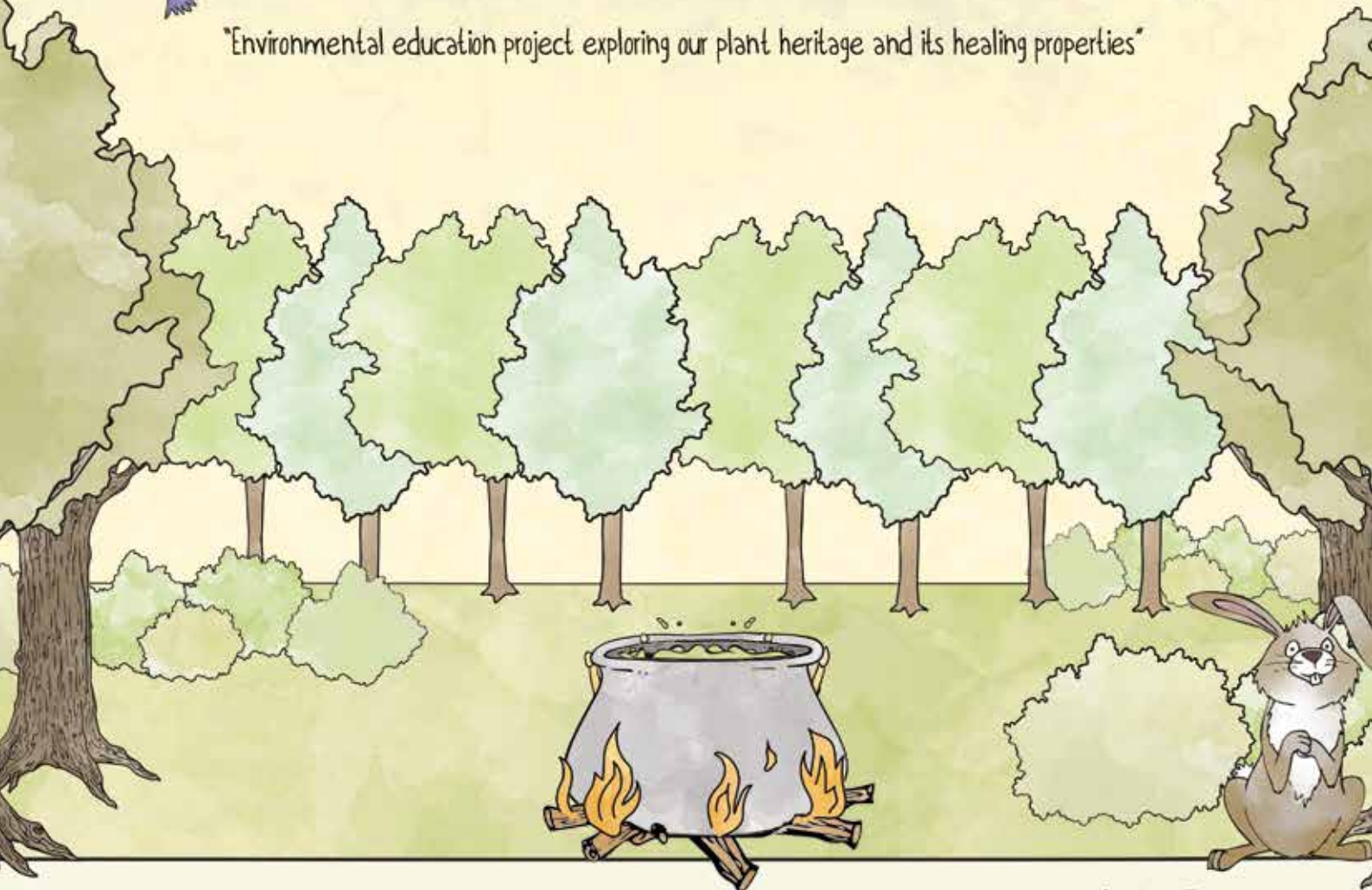




Historical Healers



"Environmental education project exploring our plant heritage and its healing properties"



With thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding this project.

The idea behind the project;

Wild plants are a fundamental element of the Welsh heritage and landscape. Wales is home to the Celtic rainforest with its rich diversity of plants, these plants are central to Welsh mythology, including Blodeu, Gwydion and legends surrounding Merlin. The generations of healers known as the Physicians of Myddfai are one example of the role of wild plants in healing in Wales.

Historical Healers was developed to expand the knowledge of Welsh Woodland plants for health and healing within our local community. It was identified that modern society was losing touch with our plant heritage and ancestral skills. We planned to explore how our ancestors used wild native plants to improve health and enhance food provisions, this was achieved during this project with great success. We were able throughout the lifetime of the project to reconnect children with plant heritage in fun hands on learning experiences, and disseminate this knowledge as a ripple effect to the wider community.



THE PROJECT;

- Educated our younger generation by providing skills and knowledge through stimulating memorable workshops. Children learnt about how plants have been used for health and healing through the ages
- Those who took part gained knowledge of the plant properties could be used for skulduggery
- Shared Welsh folk law and myths and legends surrounding woodland plants.
- Exploring how the power of knowledge was used and the fear of that power misaligned the mainly women healers as witches
- Worked with expert herbalists
- Training courses for education professionals and community volunteers were provided.
- Developed observation and recording skills
- Improved their knowledge of native woodland plants
- Learnt about the heritage of plants in Wales
- Learnt about the properties uses and applications of plants in health and healing

THE PROJECT LEFT A LEGACY IN;

- 2x resource boxes with support materials for schools to hire to deliver the project in house.
- The production of an App to protect and pass on the knowledge of our Welsh herbal heritage.

To continue this legacy this handbook details how practitioners can deliver Historical Healers to their client group and how Historical Healers will help change the participants' perceptions of local heritage of Welsh woodland flora, it will help them understand and appreciate the benefits of the outdoors and give them an understanding and appreciation of natural healing and wellbeing.

Historical Healers is not designed to be evangelical and we do not expect participants to self-remedy their illness but we want to reintroduce, preserve and pass on and share the heritage of plants as healers, their myths and folklore for our future generations.

"Plants have so much to teach us besides their value as food and medicine. They teach patience, persistence, appreciation, nurturing skills, respect and to trust our intuition. There are so many amazing lessons we can learn from working with the plants". Kristine Brown.

This handbook details ideas session by session with clips of the ID and session plan docs all available in PDF for use with groups.

Session 1

Kings and Prickly Things

THE BATTLE OF THE OAK AND HOLLY KINGS

by Rachel Schmidt

A rivalry many centuries old

Since ancient times,

The tales were told

Of two great kings,

One dark, and one light,

Who twice a year,

Would heroically fight.

The Holly King,

The darker one,

Ruled the Winter,

The dimming Sun.

While the King of Oak,

Was vibrant and bright.

He reigned over Summer,

The Sun's growing light.

At Yule they would battle,

'Twas an inspiring scene,

And the victory would go

To the mighty Oak King.

But at Midsummer's time,

With the Sun at its peak,

The Holly King would win,

The Oak King grew weak.

And so it went on,

Year after year,

And the story was told

To all who could hear.

So, honour the Oak King in Summer,

When the Sun's light is warm,

And the Holly King in winter

And the swirling snow storms.

Example Session Plan - Kings and Prickly Things

| Time | Activity |
|------------|---|
| 10mins | Explanation the terms "flora and fauna" project aims and discussion re project details. |
| 15mins | Make - Wood cookie talismans. |
| 20mins | Explore site - locate Oak and Holly trees and Nettles Record findings in their books |
| 10mins | Show the Flora ID cards explain how to read/use them. Discuss the historical background, traditions and healing properties associated with the Oak, Holly and Nettles. |
| 5mins | Read the Oak and Holly king poem. |
| 15mins | Activity 1: Oak Tree Game |
| 15mins | Activity 2: Collect nettles for teas and "no-poo" hair-repairing tonic |
| Break time | Camp fire recommended for Nettle Tea - Recap fire safety |
| 40mins | Activity 3: Prepare nettle infusion – make nettle tea. Activity 4: Prepare nettle infusions – make nettle and lavender hair-repairing tonic |
| 30mins | Activity 5: Quadrant exercise. Observe and record what is on this site. Discuss with the group: how will you record what you have hear and on other sites? Use quadrates, take photos, make graphs etc. |
| BACKUP | Make crowns for the Oak King, make floor art, make your own hair tonic, chose a plant and decide what it can be used for – share suggestions with group |



Session 2 Purple Berry Day

LINKS TO LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Motor Skills: fine and gross – designing wood cookie name amulets, threading wool, writing. Numeracy: data collection, graphs, counting, recording, percentage, calculating, estimating. KUV: exploring flora, ID'ing, healing and historical contexts, weather. PSE: teamwork, cooperation, taking turns, sharing, listening, speaking in front of others. Science: fire, cooking cake, changes of state, cooking process. Art: dying beads, colour and tone, designing amulets. Literacy: names, terms, folklore, taking notes.



| Time | Activity |
|--------|---|
| 10mins | <p>Intro talk:</p> <p>Each week will have a theme: This week is "Purple Berry Day" – we will be looking at finer details and ways of recording accurate information. We will do some cooking too and preparing a campfire cake to enjoy as a treat after all our thorough investigations. We will be looking at Elder and Blackberries.</p> <p>Hand out note pads, pencils and amulets. Explain their role 'Scientist and healer'</p> <p>Discuss how recording can be done in a range of ways.</p> |
| 30mins | <p>Activity 1: Recap the flora we looked at last week (Oak, Holly and Nettle). Record details of Elder and Blackberry in your books. Close observations (eg, curved edges, palm leaf, red stem, or smooth). FSL deliver info on each plant using plant cards if required.</p> |
| 15mins | <p>Activity 2: Exercise your observation skills. Get into teams – find natural items which match the colour of the swatches you are given. Can you identify your natural items (use the ID books)</p> |
| 30mins | <p>Activity 3: Elder story (FLS to read) and warm drinks. Discuss the Caerwys Witch and how views of shamans and healers changed over time. Explore how they became feared.</p> |
| 15mins | <p>Activity 4: Collect blackberries and leaves. And elder berries.</p> |
| 30mins | <p>Activity 5: three groups</p> <p>G1 Elder berry winter tonic – follow recipe card</p> <p>G2 Blackberry leaf tea – make and taste, compare to nettle. Discuss uses and other ideas of how to use the leaf for medicine.</p> <p>G3 Make cake/crumble – follow recipe card</p> |
| 30mins | <p>Activity 5: Quadrat work – compare to school flora</p> |
| 15mins | <p>Activity 6: Try the cake/crumble whilst sitting round fire together. Each group explains what they helped to make and how they did it.</p> |
| BACKUP | <p>Make elder/blackberry dye and beads for the amulets/make wands</p> |



Historical Healers Plant Card

Elder *Sambucus nigra*



Deciduous tree

Grows between 10 and 15m

Short stumpy trunk with few branches

Corky grey-brown bark

Cream coloured, highly scented flowers with 5-petals

Small toothed, lobed leaves

Feather-like leaves with 5-7 oval and toothed leaflets which smell bad when touched

Its deep purple, sour berries are high in Vitamin A and C

Parts used in herbal remedies to combat cold and flu

Birds and insects rely on the flowers and berries as a food source

Twigs have soft pith inside which can easily be pushed out with a tent peg or strong stick

Often grows near badger sets or rabbit warrens

The berries are anti-viral and anti-inflammatory

Uses today:

- ✓ Flowers make delicious summery elderflower cordial drink
- ✓ Elderflower wine
- ✓ Berries make a winter tonic to keep cold and flu away

Folklore:

- ✦ "Elder Mother", guardian of the underworld lived in the tree
- ✦ If you cut it without permission you'd feel her wrath
- ✦ Associated with the faery realm
- ✦ Burning the wood would bring out the devil



References:
Baker (2011)
Chester A (2016)
Woodland Trust (2018)

Images:
Cipari Kit (2007)
Department of Horticulture (2014)
Earthandair.com (2014)
Forestry Commission (2012)
Kivicki (2014)
Laurin and Leung (2012)
Vandenberg (2017)



Historical Healers Plant Card

Blackberry *Rubus fruticosus*



Perennial, wild or cultivated shrub

Grows along the ground due to its weight

Deep purple berries

Green leaves with 5 leaflets, hairy underside

Woody, thorny stems

There are around 2000 different types!

Mammals, insects and birds eat the berries

Found all over Europe, Asia and America

Grows all over the woodland floor

High in Vitamin C and rich in sugars

Used in herbal medicine to soothe throats and coughs, mouth ulcers

Used in Ancient Greece to treat gout

Root bark is astringent

Uses today:

- ✓ Make jam
- ✓ Make wine
- ✓ Leaf tea for herbal medicine
- ✓ Mouthwash
- ✓ Soothes sore throat
- ✓ Fruit eaten

Folklore:

- ✦ protection against all 'evil runes,' if gathered at the right time of the moon
- ✦ Never pick blackberries after 29th September (Michaelmas Day) as the devil would ruin them after that date
- ✦ Satan fell into blackberry bushes when cast out of heaven



References:
All Nature (2015)
Duchman (2010)
Botanical Online (2014)
Chester A (2016)
Woodland Trust (2018)

Images:
Big Oven (2017)
Google Images (2014)
Sharma (2014)
Popen (2017)
Pain Village (2017)
Wikipedia (2017)



Session 3

Using our Senses, Willow & Dandelion

Mandrakes were often thought of as being male or female in times past. The plant itself comes from the toxic Nightshade family. The Romans carefully used a wine-cup full of a medicinal drink to make anaesthetics to be used in surgical procedures.

The root often resembled something, e.g. a baby, a woman, a man. If the owner kept the mandrake he/she could find his/her true love or have the baby they desired. This made hunting them very popular.

The ages-old legend of the shrieking mandrake, as portrayed in the world of Harry Potter, holds that a mandrake will emit an ear-piercing scream if uprooted, killing the person who digs it up.

According to the stories, the only way to uproot the mandrake safely is to plug one's ears with wax, and tie a rope between a mandrake root and a dog's tail. Back away from the root and throw the dog a treat, and the dog will lunge for it. The mandrake root will be uprooted by the dog's sudden leap, and its shrieks will kill the hungry dog. The mandrake-hunter can then unplug their ears and continue the hunt in peace. (As long as they don't care too much about their dead dog). It was believed that it was European witches and sorcerers who made this legend popular, in an attempt to protect the plant from the greedy hands of illicit vendors and common folk. Witches and sorcerers used the roots, fruits, and leaves of the plant not only as charms, but also in potions, ointments, oils and other concoctions to secure the children, love, wealth, or power that their customers and friends desired.



| Time | Activity |
|--------|---|
| 10mins | Intro theme "Using our Senses, Willow and Dandelion" session. What are the senses? What do these flora look like? Dandelion was used for: cleansing the liver and kidneys, rheumatism, skin conditions, fights kidney stones. We will be tasting them today! Willow was used for: relief from pain, fever and inflammation, without the stomach upset that chemical aspirin causes (contains a compound found in aspirin) Willow bark tea Have you heard of the Whomping Willow from Harry Potter? - violent, mobile tree which protects some locations. We will be seeking and using willow today! Have you heard of a Mandrake? (In Harry Potter cures petrification and when fully grown emits fatal screams). We will be finding real ones today! |
| 15mins | Activity 1: Play the shaman game – identifying flora, acting, role play, match the plants to the ailments. Recap all the previous plants through a gameshow-style activity. |
| 15mins | Activity 2: Show dandelion roots and aerial parts. Pass round D&B and leaves to taste. Draw and write in books about dandelions. |
| 15mins | Activity 3: Willow discussion and logging in books. Make a willow shaman crown and decorate. |
| 15mins | Silent sensory circle – group to sit in silence and be conscious of the senses. FSL start them off by asking them to focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sound (eyes closed. Only open them once you have registered 5 sounds), • sight (clock 4 things, take in their details. Observe from sitting) • breathe deeply through your nose – can you smell three things (eg earth, smoke, air, rotting leaves, sweet fruits) • touch the cool bench with your hands and connect with the wood • feel – close your eyes and feel the air and light on your face You need all of your senses when working with nature. |
| 40mins | Activity 4: Mandrakes. Discuss them. Group to Make their own clay mandrake or find a real one to reshape and replant. |
| 20mins | Discuss Druids and Romans conflict – play scatter (call "the Romans are coming!") |
| BACKUP | Make a shaman's staff and practice making notions |





Historical Healers Plant Card

Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*



- 🔍 Well-known weed
 - 🔍 Grows up to 50cm tall
 - 🔍 Jagged "toothed" floppy, dark green leaves
 - 🔍 Singular big yellow flower with tubed stem
 - 🔍 Seed heads called "blow balls" or "clocks"
- 🌱 Grows on lawns, fields, woodland floors, and even through pavement and on sand dunes!
 - 🌱 Vital early food source for bees
 - 🌱 Seeds have been known to fly 5 miles away from the plant
 - 🌱 Flower heads open in the day and close at night time
- 🌬️ Long flowering cycle; can even re-flower!
 - 🌬️ High in Vitamin C
 - 🌬️ All parts of the plant can be used in herbal medicine
 - 🌬️ Root can be dried and used in herbal medicine to boost liver health

Uses today:

- ✓ Roots dried and ground to make "coffee"
- ✓ Flowers and leaves can be eaten in salads
- ✓ Dandelion wine
- ✓ Give of ethylene gas good for ripening fruit

Folklore:

- ❖ St Bride, Celtic goddess of birth, fertility and cattle associated with the flower (Feb 1st)
- ❖ Due to its diuretic properties this plant was often called a "wet-the-bed"
- ❖ Tell the time by the amount of blows it takes to clear all the seeds off the stalk
- ❖ Make a wish as you blow the seeds off the stalk

References:
Baker (1996)
Caryopsis (2017)
Chevallier A (2016)
Kew (2017)
RHS (2017)
iStock
Buzzle (2015)
Clipart (2017)
Lawsciences (2017)
Kew (2017)
Pinterest (2017)



Historical Healers Plant Card

Willow



- 🔍 Deciduous trees/shrubs
 - 🔍 Can grow up to 25m tall
 - 🔍 Long leaves with serrated edges
 - 🔍 Long yellow/green catkins in spring
 - 🔍 Usually found near water or in wet ground
- 🍵 There are around 400 types of willow
 - 🍵 Very bendy, pliable wood ideal for weaving with
 - 🍵 Many types of caterpillar feed on the leaves
 - 🍵 Bees love to feed on the catkins
- 🌿 Can live 50-75 years
 - 🌿 Sacred healing tree of the Native Americans
 - 🌿 Willow bark used as painkilling and anti-inflammatory medicine
 - 🌿 Drink bark infusions to ease cold and flu symptoms

Uses today:

- ✓ Flexible wood used for weaving baskets
- ✓ Emblem of sorrow and mourning
- ✓ Aspirin used as pain relief
- ✓ Cricket bats
- ✓ Charcoal
- ✓ Ideal to plant in very wet gardens

Folklore:

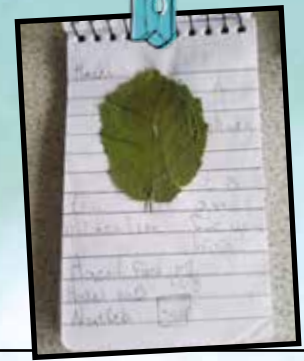
- ❖ Traditional wood of Dutch clogs
- ❖ Celts used willow to make chariot wheel spokes
- ❖ Associated with the Moon Goddess
- ❖ Associated with magic in myths and legends
- ❖ The Sacred Healing Tree of the Native Americans

References:
Stony (2017)
Trees For Life (2017)
Woodland Trust (2016)
iStock
iStock (2017)
Clipart (2018)
English Willow Bees (2011)
iStock (2017)
Kindred Spirit Magazine (2017)
LandscapePhoto (2014)
Traditional Roots (2017)



Session 4

Hawthorns, hearts and heartbreak



Historical Healers Plant Card

Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*



- 🔍 A wild herb found growing in damp places
- 🔍 Grows up to 1.5m tall
- 🔍 Has creamy white clusters of flowers
- 🔍 Red/purple tall stems
- 🔍 Large serrated leaves, dark green on the top side and white and downy on the underside



Thrives in coastal, heathland and grassland habitats



Flowers June – September, smells like almonds



Flowers and leaves used in herbal medicine



Used as a pain relief, contains substances found in aspirin



Used to flavour mead in the Middle Ages



Found all over Europe and Asia



Called "Queen of the Meadow" and "Bridewort"



Soothes headaches, toothache, rheumatism, arthritis



Aides digestion and acid indigestion

References:
Buchanan (2016)
Chevalier A (2014)
The Wildlife Trusts (2017)

Images:
Demeter Wholefoods (2018)
Herbs with Rosalea (2016)
Rathour (2019)
Royal Museum of Greenwich (2017)
Taste the Wild (2014)
Tinsstock (2019)
Wikipedia (2018)

Uses today:

- ✓ Used in healing remedies
- ✓ Tablets containing meadowsweet made for soothing rheumatic aches
- ✓ Also helps soothe sciatica and gout
- ✓ Teas, tinctures, decoctions and tablets

Folklore:

- In Welsh Mythology, Gwydion and Math created Blodeuwedd ("flower face") a woman out of meadowsweet and other plants
- Queen Elizabeth I liked meadowsweet around the home to make it smell nice
- Scent induces a deep sleep from which the sleeper may never wake
- Unlucky indoors



| Time | Activity |
|--------|--|
| 10mins | Hand out note books and amulets. Intro talk: H&S, rules, order of the day: "Hawthorns, hearts and heartbreak" Introduce plant names: hazel, hawthorn and meadowsweet. Also folklore, heritage and the Mabinogion. Recap previous plants. |
| 15mins | Activity 1: Break into groups and see if you can find hazel, hawthorn and meadowsweet samples to bring back to the fire circle. |
| 30mins | 123 call. Discuss healing properties of Hazel, hawthorn and meadowsweet. Draw and label features and uses in your books. |
| 20mins | Hand out warm drinks. Discuss bards and how stories would be shared. Explain how the Eisteddfod origins (a bard-competition) Blodeuwedd Story – FSL to read it. |
| 20mins | Activity 2: Make Blodeuwedd characters from natural items and clay. |
| 30mins | Activity 3: Forage for and wash Hawthorn berries and leaves. |
| 45mins | Activity 4: Group 1: Prepare chutney / hoisin sauce Group 2: Prepare hawthorn leaf infusion (bitterness at this time of year but good for comparison to other teas). Group 3: Make hawthorn berry/leaf prints on fabric (using mallets) to make a dress for Blodeuwedd or for a herbal first aid kit Group 4: Make hazel leaf infusion – discuss the term "astringent". All groups to have made fabric prints and tasted the drinks by the end of the session, logging flavours and recipes in their books. |
| BACKUP | Make up spells to reverse a curse for Blodeuwedd |



Historical Healers Plant Card

Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*



- 🔍 Deciduous tree
- 🔍 Grows up to 15m
- 🔍 Branches and sticks covered in thorns
- 🔍 Knotted, grey-brown bark
- 🔍 White or pink blossoms in May which can be quite smelly (supposedly like rotten flesh!)



- Small toothed, lobed leaves
- Insects, birds, bees and small mammals feed on the leaves, berries and blossom
- Its berries are red and called "haws"
- Parts used in herbal remedies to improve heart health and circulation



- Dormice love to eat the blossom
- Lots of birds and small mammals rely on this thick thorny tree for food and shelter
- Eating raw haws causes stomach upsets
- Haws are tasty in chutney and jelly to go with meat

References
 Chevalier A (2016)
 Cohe, W. (2015)
 Goddessandgreenman.com (2016)
 Woodland Trust (2016)

Images
 Earthlinks - Wordpress (2016)
 Glover and Smith (2012)
 Perfect Health at Home (2016)
 Taste for Life (2016)

- Wood can be used to:**
- ✓ Slow, hot-burning fuel
 - ✓ Make charcoal
 - ✓ Make tool handles

Folklore:

- ❖ Was associated with the Celtic/Pagan early summer fertility festival, "Beltane"
- ❖ Called the "May Tree"
- ❖ Blossom should never be took indoors as it portended sickness or even death



Historical Healers Plant Card

Common Hazel *Corylus Avellana*



- 🔍 Deciduous tree
- 🔍 Grows up to 12m high and 12m wide
- 🔍 Wood is really bendy
- 🔍 Smooth grey bark
- 🔍 Catkins appear in the spring – a vital source of pollen for bees



- Hairy heart-shaped leaves
- The leaves provide food for caterpillars and moths
- Dried leaves make a tea to reduce swelling
- Leaves are anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory



- Dormice eat the nuts to fatten up and survive the winter
- Lots of birds and small mammals rely on the nuts for food and shelter
- Finely ground nuts can be used to make a cough mixture
- Nuts are high in nutrients and protein – "brain food"

References
 Trees for Life (2015)
 WoodlandTrust (2016)

Images
 Alamy (2016)
 Copicart (2016)
 Coppice Products (2016)
 Department of Horticulture (2014)
 Italy Pyl Ltd (2016)
 Medical Daily (2016)
 Natural Fencing (2008)

- Wood can be used to:**
- ✓ Weave fences and baskets
 - ✓ Make charcoal
 - ✓ "Y" shaped dowsing rods to find underground water

Folklore:

- ❖ Celtic – Hazel brought creativity and inspired poetry
- ❖ Nuts of wisdom fell into a well
- ❖ Druids made ceremonial staffs from hazel wood



Session 5

Heroic Herbal First Aid



| Time | Activity |
|--------|--|
| 10mins | Hand out books and amulets in the log circle. Intro talk: H&S, rules, order of the day: looking at Rowan and Silver Birch. Herbal First Aid Kits. |
| 10mins | Read the Rowan story and discuss folklore attached |
| 40mins | Activity 1: Seek samples of both trees and bring back to the fire circle. Draw and label features and uses in your books. Go through plant card info. |
| 40mins | Activity 2: G1 (small group of volunteers) Make silver birch twig tea – share samples and medicinal benefit findings G2 Broom making - Find materials for making a broomstick. Discuss the representation of it (sweeping out negativity and illness. Rowan was often used as was Hazel) – Name it (eg Nimbus 2000). Everyone to have made a broom and samples of twig tea by lunchtime |
| 15mins | 123 call. Sit round fire and sample rowan jelly together Activity 3: Make rowan berry seed bombs and hazel wands |
| 30mins | Activity 4: Herbal First Aid kits |
| 20mins | Activity 5: Make your own 5-10 minute play in small groups – must contain these characters: Healer (shaman/wizard/white witch), patient, master of the dark arts, an animal/bird/creature – use your herbal first aid kit as a prop. |
| BACKUP | Foraging |

Session 6 Community share event...

Over the course of the project 10 local schools benefited from the six week long project the sessions lasted the length of the school day. The first five sessions as the session plans detail above looked at site survey and games, activities, crafts and cooking around what they found on the site and the healing properties associated with them. A large part of the project was spent of storytelling and campfire chatter about myths and folk law. Session six was the opportunity for the groups to share what they had learnt with the public. This was generally done at school and parents and community members were invited. These share days were all unique some focused on film, acting, show and tell or come and try hands on sharing techniques were used. The children designed and ran the days and they were very well received by all.



Final session for reflection and assessing success of the programme

Intro talk: Order of the day; reflection and celebration.

Split group into 5 groups. Each group will be given the task of presenting in preparation for the parents/peers at the end of the day. It will all be recorded using school ipads.

PLANNING - FSL write on the white board so they have something to refer to

In groups: develop a presentation – consider how you will present it, assign roles, props required. Produce scripts. Rehearse.

Each team/group has a week assigned to them, they are to present what they did and learned that particular week.

Presentation to contain:

- Plants involved and examples of,
- How they could be used medicinally,
- Folklore associated,
- Describe/demonstrate activities we did using the plant(s)

Cooking/brewing/crafting/making/rehearsing

Quiz

Rehearsals

Groups take turns to record

Set up tables to show parents what was made/achieved each week – hang bunting

Parents/community members arrive – free flow from stall to stall/group to group to share project



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