

Environmental Exchange Box

Spring Ideas

Spring is the season of awakening. Days are lengthening and the weather is changeable day to day, hour by hour! Plants burst forth after dormancy and animals wake up from their winter slumber or return from warmer climes and are busy feeding and having babies. Bird song fills the air and exciting new colours, sounds, and sensations surround us. Nature's cycles are so different across BC in spring; the snow may still be deep in some regions while others are green with many flowers blooming.

What can your students explore in spring and share with your partner class? Here are some ideas and resources to support your Environmental Exchange in springtime and beyond.

Spring at School. Take a closer look at signs of spring in the schoolyard. What is leafing out or in bloom? Take photos or sketch. Gather small samples of leaves or flowers to press, identify, and send in the box. If your students have "adopted" a tree, have a sit spot or a place they go to regularly, have them notice and record changes since winter or fall.

Bud Buddies. Find a bud on a tree. Gently tie a piece of yarn below the bud. Take a few photos as the bud opens up into a leaf. Describe the experience. Can be done as a class and sent as a series of photos or sketches to the other class. (From our friends at [Wildsight](#))

Spring Scavenger Hunts. Create a spring scavenger hunt or use some of the ones that we have on our website. Have each student share something from the activity with their partner class, such as a sketch, a description of the most interesting thing they found, what was the hardest thing to find, and a wonder question.

- [Spring Signs and Colours](#)
- [Spring Scavenger Hunt](#)
- Connect to Nature Bingo ([English](#)) ([French](#))

Colour Walk. Spring is colourful! Give students a paint chip from the [BC Biodiversity-Nature's Palette](#) and have them find items in nature that match their colour. What did you notice? What was surprising? What colour was easiest/hardest to find? Share photos or sketches, paint chips, and reflections with your partner class.

Sounds of Spring. Spring brings many new sounds...from lawn mowers to bird songs. A quick and easy activity to tune in to your surroundings anywhere outdoors is to make a sound map. Go outdoors and give each student an index card and writing utensil. Students sit quietly, spaced apart, and mark themselves in the center of the paper. Every time you hear a sound you note it with a symbol or words in the direction in which you heard it. Younger children can just listen with eyes closed and every time they hear something they can point or put up a finger. Try the activity at different times of day or in different places to make comparisons. Share your sound maps and reflections on the experience with your partner class. You could also try recording the sounds that you hear and sending them, too!

For the Birds. Birds are busy in spring. They migrate back to their breeding areas and are singing to attract mates and defend territories. They are building nests, laying eggs, and feeding their chicks. It's a great time of year to notice and learn about birds. What birds live in your area and what can you learn from the birds? Some things to try: Make bird cards or a book with photos or drawings to share with your partner class. Refer to [HCTF Education's Bird Friendly Backyard](#) series for common birds in each region of BC. Make a game to match the picture of a bird with its habitat, its food, or a recording of its song. Learn bird calls and more at <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/> or the Merlin app. Make toilet paper tube binoculars for younger children. Create [bird feeders](#) from recycled and natural objects and observe the visitors. Try [Bird Behaviour Bingo](#) for a fun activity where species identification is not required.

Pollinator Power. Everyone enjoys the beauty of spring flowers. But for plants, the sole reason to produce flowers is to make seeds. Flowers have pollen that may be spread by the wind or by pollinators. We rely on pollinators to produce many of our foods. Look closely at flower anatomy using magnifiers. Go on a [Life in the Flowers](#) hunt and look for flower visitors like butterflies, hummingbirds, bees, flies and other insects. Then "Bee a pollinator" by using a Q-tip to gently gather pollen from one flower and transport it to another flower of the same type. Share your observations or write pollinator poems to share with your partner class. Support native bees by making a [bee home](#)—one for you and one for your partner class.

How Does Your Garden Grow? Many schools have gardens or do planting in the spring. Do you think the same plants can grow in different parts of BC? Do they grow at the same speed, at the same time of year? Share your school garden learning with your partner class. Make a game to match specific seeds with a picture of the plant, and a picture of the plant when in flower or fruit. Try germinating bean seeds in a clear ziplock bag with a moist paper towel. Tape the bag to a bright window and document how the seeds grow and change.

Nature Art. Create a small piece of nature art in your yard, a forest or the school yard using objects on the ground ("Nature's Waste"). Photograph it in a unique way. Send the photo and a description or a small sample of the natural objects used in it (berries, fallen leaves, petals, rocks, etc). How does nature recycle?

Special Places. Photograph a favourite natural place around the community with 5 words to describe it (can be done from school or home).

Biodiversity Bookmarks. Make bookmarks with drawings of local trees, leaves, or other natural life with a description of defining traits or traditional uses.

Beauty Walk. Take a walk around the schoolyard or community with ipads and have students capture what is beautiful to them in nature. Describe why it appealed to them.

Tiny Hike. Give everyone a piece of string ~ 1 m long. Go outdoors and place the string on the ground. Imagine that you have shrunk to the size of an ant and you are hiking along your tiny trail. What do you see? Share photos of students participating, a close up of something along their trail, or have them write a story about their tiny hike.

Nature Calendar. Make a nature calendar and every day include a description or drawing of something that a student observed in nature that day. Share your calendar with your partner class.

Who Am I? Get a set of nature cards of common wild plants and animals specific to your bioregion- a set to keep and one to share with your partner class. (Make your own or use from HCTF resources). Two ways to play: 1) On one side have the sketch or photograph of the creature and on the back side include 3-4 clues about the creature. Try to guess "Who Am I" with as few clues read out as possible. Keep score where each clue read is a point and the fewest points wins. 2) Attach a loop of string to each card and have students wear a card on their back. They circulate and ask Yes/No questions to try to guess their secret identity. Try playing Who Am I? with your partner class on Zoom! See the [Who Am I - Lesson Plan](#) to deepen the activity.

Biodiversity Hunt. Go outdoors and look for signs of diversity in nature. Find at least 3 different items of each category: sizes and shapes of leaves, colours and smells of plants, textures of plant stems and leaves, signs of animals, spider webs, insects, soil colours, and add more of your own categories. Try doing the same activity in different habitats, such as in the schoolyard and at a nearby forest. How do they compare? Include sketches or small samples of findings in your exchange box.