



The Arboretum for Educators

Resources for Teachers, Students, and Families

October 2024

Outdoor Learning Activities



If your goal this year is to take students outside more often to notice the changes in their environment, why not engage them in some of the following activities? The best science learning is grounded in the local environment, stems from natural phenomenon, and is hands-on.

PreK–Grade 2: Bees and Leaves

Fall is a busy time of the year for everyone, including BEES! Take students outside to a sunny part of the yard and observe carefully to see if there are any flying insects. [Learn a bit about why these busy bees are everywhere](#), and then check out Whole Kids Foundation's collection of educational materials about [bees and pollinators](#), for both schools and families.

Due to the summer drought, trees are losing their leaves now, so why not collect some for investigations. Bring students outside to touch and collect leaves. Introduce vocabulary words that describe them: bumpy, rough, smooth, toothed, rounded, fuzzy, thick, slippery, crunchy, etc. Use leaves and chalk outside to [create graphs and visuals on the blacktop](#).

Grades 3–5: Drought

It has been a very dry summer, and plants are feeling the stress. Several [recent reports](#) state that we've had the longest dry stretch in the last 25 years with not much rain in sight. Take your students outside to document all the ways they observe plants and the environment responding to the lack of rain. Things to note include yellowing leaves, leaf drop, curled leaves, excessive brown needles, higher incidence of fungus on leaves, dry soil, and fewer invertebrates. Learn more about the [physiology of plants and their drought adaptations](#).

Looking for a fun way for students to read more science texts in short bursts and still learn cool facts? Try the [American Museum of Natural History's Ology cards](#)—digital “trading cards” in dozens of science topics including the scientists (“Ologists”) themselves!

Middle and High School: Invasive Species

Have your students take part in their first Community Science project and tackle the topic of invasive species at the same time. Participate in a Massachusetts BioBlitz sponsored by the MA Dept. of Agricultural Resources anytime from October 1–15, run by iNaturalist. Simply take students outdoors near some trees and have them document all the living things they see on or near that tree. [Read more details](#) on this blog post and download the [Asian Longhorned Beetle Field Guide](#).

Arboretum Happenings



Caterpillar Lab

Oct. 5–6

11am–4pm

Hunnewell Building

The Caterpillar Lab returns to the Arboretum for a full weekend packed with caterpillar displays, free-exploration programming, digital microscopes, and experienced educators on hand to give you insights into these amazing animals.

[Learn More](#)



Make Nature Art Like Andy Goldsworthy

Nov. 3

2–3:30pm

Maple Collection

Use freshly fallen leaves at the Arboretum to make beautiful art. This is a chance to play in the leaves and make something beautiful—even if it only lasts until the next gust of wind!

[Learn More](#)



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