

Working In Tandem With The Seasons

Paddy Madden continues with the series on SESE tips for throughout the year.

June

OUTDOOR

1 Harvest potatoes: When the flowers on the potatoes have withered its time to harvest them. Some schools have a 'Potato Day' where different potato dishes such as concannon and boxty are cooked and given to the children. Sow hardy annuals in the vacant bed to provide colour over the summer.

2 Harvest salad crops and vegetables: Children love eating raw peas. They also love making sandwiches from garden produce. A school could have a 'Salad Party'. Place a table in the garden with loaves of white bread and basins of water for washing the salads. Let the children choose their own ingredients for the sandwich.

3 Have an Open Day or Evening in the school and garden: Divide the 6th class into pairs and get them to bring parents/visitors around the garden and school. Children love acting as guides to people older than themselves!

4 Propagate primroses from seed: June is a good month to collect wild primrose seed and sow them. Feel the end of a flower stem for the little round capsule of seed. Empty the green seed onto a tray of seed compost which has been watered and cover with glass or plastic. Leave it in a shady place and they will have germinated by the time the new school year begins. Prick them out into six pack plant trays filled with peat-free compost and care for them outside. They should be ready for planting in the spring.



Lettuce and gravel



Lettuce and bark chips

5 Do fair tests on how to deter slugs and snails from lettuce: See 'Paddy's School Garden' for ideas.

6 Collect leaf/common wildflower specimens from around the school: Provide each child with a clipboard, A4 sheet of paper, sticky envelope label and a pencil. Bring them on a nature walk to collect specimens. When a specimen is collected they could tear a thin strip off a sticky label and stick it and label it on the sheet. Later they could press these inside. Tree twigs with leaves and flower stems with petals can also be pressed. When they are dry they can be laminated and displayed. **Tip:** Flatten the stems with a hammer before putting them through the laminator.

7 Do fair tests on transpiration from trees: There are two types of test that can be investigated: Test 1-Does a leaf transpire? Test 2-Which side of a leaf transpires the most? See 'Paddy's School Garden' on www.blackrockec.ie for instructions. Test 1 can be extended by asking a questions such as: Do leaves transpire more from the south side of a tree than the north? Do leaves transpire more in hot weather conditions than in cool weather conditions? ➔



Transpiration test



Primrose seed at base of spent flower





INDOOR

1 Make an insect pooter: June is a good month to catch and observe insects such as ladybirds around the school grounds. To make a pooter you will need: a small clear plastic container c. 1 litre capacity and c.10cm in diameter with lid; 2x20 cm lengths of clear plastic tubing 8mm in diameter; small piece of J cloth; nail scissors; blue tac or plasticine; thin elastic band; sellotape. Follow the instructions on 'Paddy's School Garden' on www.blackrockec.ie for assembling.

Hygiene Tip: If the children are using one pooter per group to collect insects it is a good idea for hygienic purposes to have 4 cm lengths of 6.5 mm diameter tubes for each pupil. When a pupil wants to have a go he/she sticks the short tube into the end of the green marked tube and sucks. When the pupil is finished he/she pulls the short piece out and another pupil inserts his/her short tube into the 8mm tube and sucks.

2 Press leaves and flowers: Press leaves and flowers that have been collected outdoors. Place A4 sheets of tabloid-sized newspaper on a piece of board of similar size. Place two A4 sheets with wildflowers or leaves on

the newspapers. (Make sure the children have their names on the sheets) Place 4 more newspapers on top of the two A4 sheets. Continue in this fashion until all the children's sheets are covered with newspapers. Place another board on top of the pile. Leave in a warm place with a weight on top. (The combined new curriculum books are ideal!) After three days remove the damp newspapers and replace with fresh ones. Leave for another four days. The leaves/wildflowers should be dry by then.

3 Continue keeping records: www.birdwatchireland.ie
www.ispynature.com;
www.phenology.biodiversityireland.ie
www.greenwave.ie

4 Have a plant sale to raise funds for the school garden: Plants raised from seeds or cuttings could be sold. Parents will always buy what their children produce! Sometimes local Garden Centres will supply plants at a little above cost price to help the sale. Parents, too, will often donate plants. 🌱



Insect pooter



Pressing leaves

Strand Units covered this month: environmental awareness, caring for the environment, plant and animal life, properties and characteristics of materials



PADDY MADDEN lectures in SESE in Coláiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education. The monthly articles, 'Working in tandem with the seasons', are based on the very successful course of the same name which was pioneered in Marino in 2009. This year the course will take place in the Blackrock Education Centre on one Monday every month from September to June commencing on 27 September. Enquiries to Catherine@blackrockec.ie. The Centre will also produce 5 short videos every month based on the monthly sessions. They can be downloaded from www.blackrockec.ie. Click on 'Paddy's School Garden'.