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## Pine Cones For Parents

BEE GREEN AND ONLY PRINT IF YOU HIVE TO :)

### Preparation and safety

Each season, nature will bring you the resources that you need. However, if you do not have a natural setting or lack certain natural items, try to collect these in advance of your sessions. Make a habit of going out for a walk at weekends - you'll improve your own physical and mental health, which is good for you, and you'll collect your missing items. You can also encourage parents to get collecting through your newsletters! Make your world one big healthy, Muddy community. You will get an idea of the types of resources that you need each season. The only resource that you may need to buy is air-drying clay.

Weather wise, we will provide you with ideas for all types of weather. The only time that we advise you NOT to go outside is on extremely windy days and during thunderstorms. Otherwise, there's no excuses - get yourself out there!

Always risk assess with the children present. As you enter the natural environment, spend 30 seconds talking about the dangers that the weather conditions may present, such as slippery surfaces and hot sun. If possible, offer the children a solution to any issues, such as seeking out a safe, shady area if the sun is too hot. Keep sticks low and only use stones no bigger than the palm of the children's hands. remind them to use feet first then hands when collecting from the floor and wash hands thoroughly after.

Please be aware that all guidance and resources suggested within this guide are carried out at your own risk. We stipulate that all Muddy Puddle Teacher resources and guidance must be used within the context of your own company policies, procedures, guidance, risk assessments and insurance. We do not, in any way, suggest that you follow our guidance if it does not meet the requirements of your own company policies, procedures, guidance, risk assessments or insurance. It is your responsibility to ensure that any activities or resources used are suitable for the individual needs of the children within your care, including any needs related to age, health or allergies.

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# Introducing Pine Cones

## What Are Pine Cones?

Pine cones are the woody cone or round shaped 'fruits' of pine trees. They are made up of individual plates known as scales. The female pine cones hold seeds and, when the seeds are ready, the scales open up and the seeds are released. Pine cones stay in the tree for different lengths of time depending on the type of tree they come from.

### When do pine cones fall?

Pine cones fall in Autumn and can be found near to conifer trees and in woodland. The most common conifer trees in the UK are: Scots Pine and Common Juniper. The non-native Black Pine can also be found in the UK. All these trees have different-shaped pine cones and they don't all drop at the same time.



## What Can We Do With Pine Cones?

### Decorations

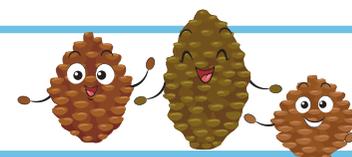
The most popular thing to do with pine cones are to use them as a decoration. Pine cone frames and wreaths are very easy to make. Simply take your pine cones and fix them to a loop of wire, until you have a full wreath that is ready to hang on your door.

You could add pine cones to your role play area or mud kitchen as pretend food or money. You could also paint your pine cones or decorate them with craft materials for a colourful twist.



## What Will The Children Be Learning?

Discovering their senses; feeling, smelling new objects from nature.  
 Developing their fine & gross motor skills, balancing.  
 Maths: counting objects, sorting and matching, weight, mass and measurement, talking about 3D shapes, making objects 'fit', problem solving, thinking about money and paying concepts..  
 Creative: imaginary and role-play scenarios, creating and remaining in a role, thinking of new uses and / or representations for everyday objects.  
 PHSE: devising own games, playing independently, sustained involvement and interest in self-chosen tasks.  
 Science / knowledge of the world: discussing where pine-cones come from, vocabulary - spiky and rough.



Wild like the wind in  
 the tall pine trees,  
 I got roots and I  
 got wings....  
 Miranda Lambert

# 5 Fun Pine Cone Facts



## Pine Cones Are Nature's Barometer For Wildfires And Severe Winters

A pine cone on the forest floor can show if there is a risk of wildfires. Closed scales on a cone mean damp conditions, but open scales mean the forest floor is dry. In autumn, pine trees grow larger cones before a bad winter to make sure that some seeds will survive the squirrel and bird feeding feasts.

## Scandinavia Loves pine cones!

Children in Finland and Sweden like to make traditional toys called 'Cone Cows', using sticks for legs, attached into the pine cone scales. In Finland, there is a park with giant pine cone cow sculptures large enough for children to ride on. Sweden had printed cone cows on their postage stamps.

## Pine Cones Are Female

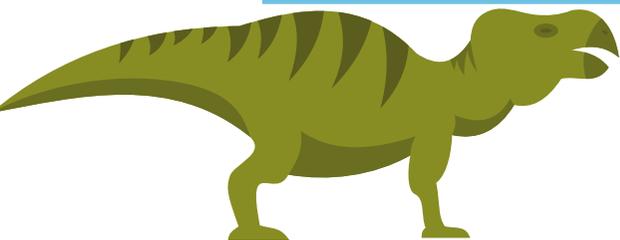
The pine cone is the female part of the tree! The male pine cones are smaller, lighter, and don't blossom in the same way.

## Dinosaurs Loved Pine Cones

These days pine cones are eaten by squirrels, woodpeckers and crossbills, but about sixty million years ago, they were a favourite meal of Hadrosaurids (duck-billed dinosaurs). Duckbill dinosaurs had specially shaped jaws and thousands of rows of teeth which were perfect to eat tough, chewy pine cones.

## Not all pine cones are pine cones!

All members of the pine family, (pine, spruce, firs, cedars, larches, hemlocks, yews) have cones, but 'pine cones' only come from pine trees. The largest pine cones in the world are from the Coulter Pines in California. These giant cones have dagger-like scales and can weigh up to 11 pounds!



# Pine Cone Experiment

## What Makes Pine Cones Change?

You can set up a simple experiment to show how pine cones open. Do pine cones look different in the rain?

### Materials and Tools:

- 3 jars
- 3 pine cones (all the same size)
- Warm water
- Cold water
- Ruler
- Timer



### Instructions:

1. Measure the pine cones and make a note.
2. Put each pine cone in a jar, (glass jars are best but please supervise young children carefully).
3. Label each jar and fill one jar with warm water, one with cold water and leave the last one with just air to use as a comparison.

### What makes the most difference, air temperature or moisture?

1. The pine cone that is left in air will not change.
2. The scales in a pine cone soaked in warm water will open up.
3. The scales in a pine cone soaked in cold water will close up.

### Interesting facts;

Pine cones float.  
Pine cone scales close up when it rains.  
A curved glass jar will magnify it's contents.



# Pine Cone Bird Feeder

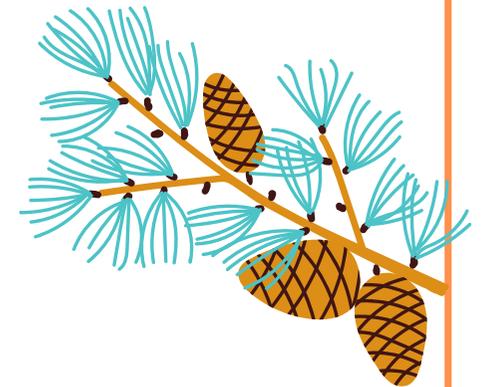
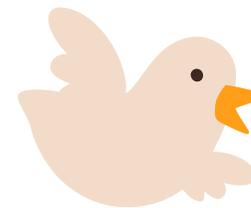


You will need:

Dry pine cones, bird seed, lard, peanut butter or coconut oil, spoon, mixing bowl

## Method

- Let your coconut oil soften up and put it in the mixing bowl.
- Add the other ingredients to the bowl and mix the squidgy mix together.
- Pack the mixture around the cones with your fingers.
- Put your cones in the fridge to set.
- Fix some twine to the pine cone and hang somewhere safe.
- Wait for the hungry birds to come flocking.



## Home Learning Activities



Find more free  
and home  
friendly  
resources to  
help your child  
learn on our  
website.

### Have a go at some of these fun and simple learning tasks.

- Go for a walk and while walking with your child make up stories together. Maybe you could start the story then ask them to continue it and to make up the next part and so on.
- Doing this outside works perfectly and gives you inspiration and prompts so use it!
- Maybe one of your characters is The Great Old Tree or the mischievous little bird.
- If your child really enjoyed this then ask them, how about we write that all down when we get home? Who knows this little task could be the making of the next J.K. Rowling :)



“To us, family means putting your arms around each other and being there.” -Barbara Bush