

Get Outdoors!

NATURE BASED ACTIIVTIES

A nature based activity could include:

- Walking
- Gardening
- Creative activities in green spaces
- Outdoor swimming
- Or any activity in the natural environment

The positive effects of nature is backed by years of scientific research with benefits to both mental and physical health including:

- Reduce stress, anxiety, depression & fatigue
- Boost our immune systems
- Encourage us to be more physically active
- Reduce the risk of chronic disease

HOW DOES IT WORK?

1 Chemicals In Nature

Studies show that spending time in forests boosts activity immune system cells and the effects of this have been found to last for over 30 days.

The mechanism behind this is thought to be through chemical compounds produced by plants, which are mainly absorbed when breathing in causing their blood levels rise rapidly after exposure.

2 Sunlight

Even on cloudy days, sunlight can benefit the body by penetrating through clouds and stimulating cells to produce melatonin, which is a hormone acts as a powerful anti-oxidant.

Sunlight promotes vitamin D production which supports bone health, reduces inflammation & boosts the immune system. It also helps boost serotonin levels, a hormone linked to mood, calmness & focus.

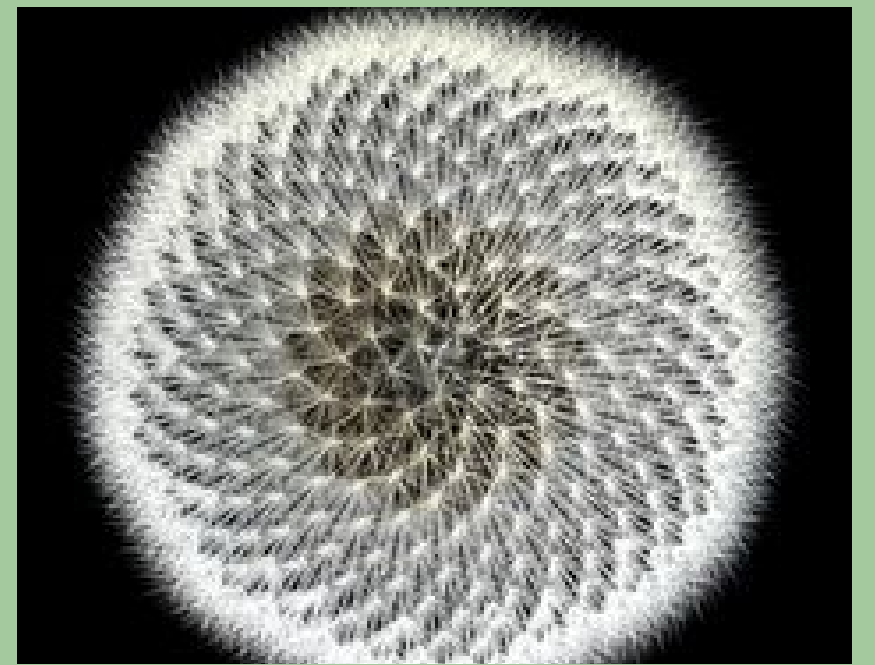
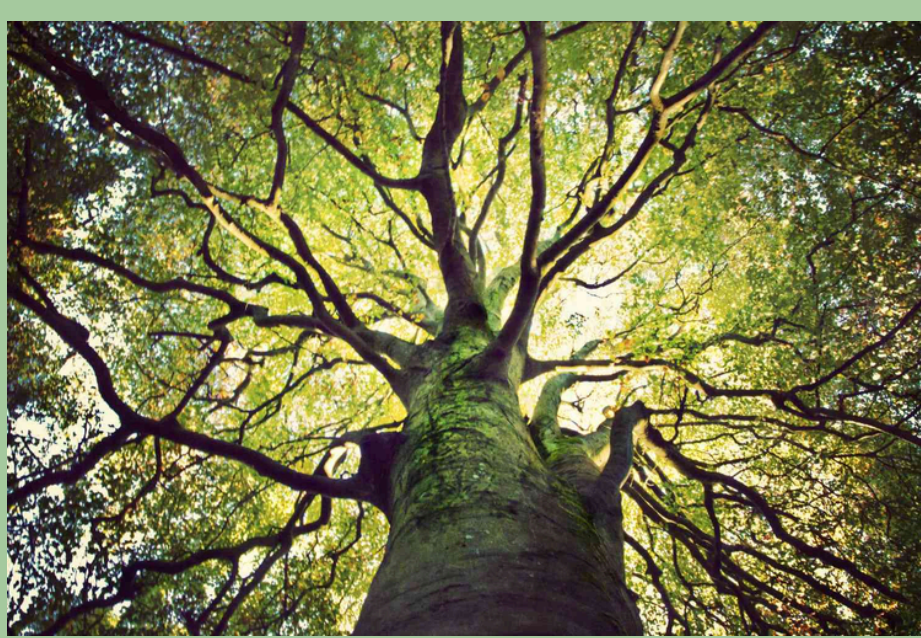
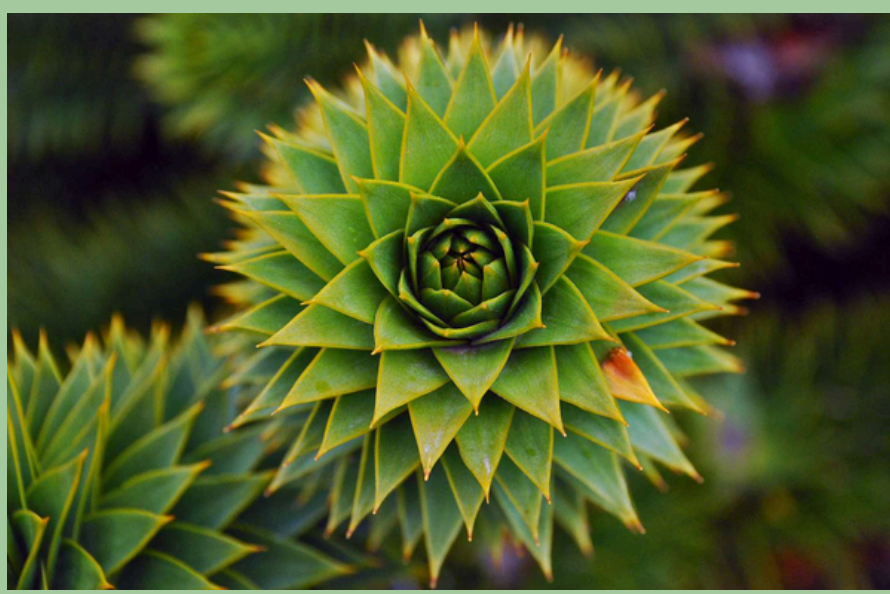
But don't forget that increased sun exposure does increase skin cancer so remember sunscreen when outdoor for longer periods!

3 Fractals

Fractals are a type of pattern that naturally occur in nature. They appear the same at different levels of magnification.

The shapes of lightning, rivers, coastlines, tree branches and even the blood vessels within your body are types of fractal patterns.

Research has shown that just viewing these patterns can have a relaxing and restorative effect on the brain. Look below for some examples of fractals in nature.



Nature's impacts on specific conditions

Some conditions like diabetes & high blood pressure have a high prevalence in the UK and they can have detrimental impacts on our health if not well-managed. Spending time outside and moving our bodies have a significant positive benefits to the outcome of these conditions.

A study conducted in Finland showed that someone who visited green spaces more often were less likely to use anti-hypertensives than those who visited green spaces less frequently. This can be green spaces within residential areas!

Regular exercise (including walking, cycling and jogging) has been shown to lower HbA1c levels in people with diabetes and reduce cardiovascular risk.



- Walking: Regular brisk walking can lower blood pressure by about 5-8 mmHg.



- Cycling: Riding outdoors for at least 30 minutes strengthens the cardiovascular system, reducing hypertension risks.



- Hiking: Trails with varied terrain provide both aerobic and strength benefits, which can lower blood pressure significantly.



- Swimming: Enhances blood circulation and helps reduce systolic blood pressure by up to 9 mmHg.



Walks in natural environments may decrease depressive symptoms in people with clinical depression including improved short-term memory span. You don't particularly have to do any vigorous exercises, all you have to do is walk to get the benefits!

We understand that everyone may not be able to get outside and do lots of activities due to a multitude of reasons, so below is information on things you can do within the perimeter of your home

Indoor Activities

- **Indoor Plant Care:**

- Plant Identification: Use apps or books to identify plants.
- Propagation: Experiment with propagating plants from cuttings or seeds.
- Plant Journaling: Document plant growth, watering schedules, and observations.

- **Nature Observation:**

- Window Bird Watching: Set up a bird feeder and identify bird species.
- Insect Exploration: Use a magnifying glass to observe insects in your garden or home.
- Cloud Watching: Observe and identify cloud formations.

- **Creative Expression:**

- Nature-Inspired Art: Create paintings, drawings, or collages inspired by nature.
- Nature Writing: Write poetry, short stories, or journal entries about nature.



HOUSEPLANTS

- Houseplants have been shown to reduce stress, anxiety and depression.
- Other health benefits of indoor plants include reduced blood pressure, reduced fatigue and headaches.
- Certain plants can absorb pollutants and improve air quality.
- Some popular low maintenance plants include rubber plants & spider plants. To find out more about indoor plants click the link below:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/types/houseplants/for-human-health>



Garden-Based Activities

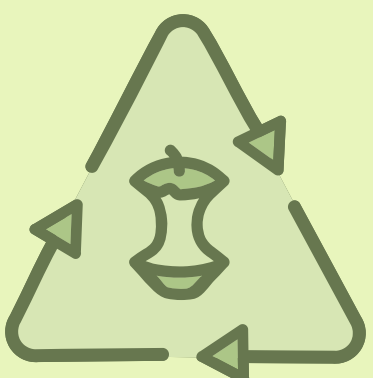


- **Gardening:**

- Sensory Gardening: Plant a garden that engages the senses: fragrant flowers, colorful plants, and edible herbs.
- Wildlife Gardening: Create a habitat for birds, butterflies, and other wildlife by planting native plants.
- Composting: Learn about composting and create a compost bin to recycle food scraps.

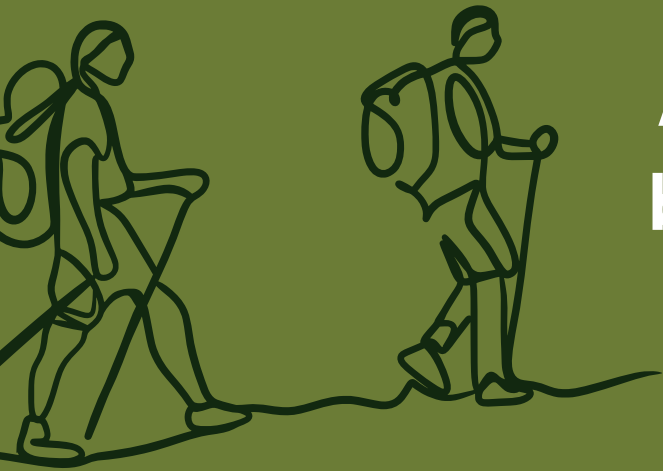
- **Mindful Nature Connection:**

- Mindful Gardening: Practice mindfulness techniques while gardening, such as focusing on the present moment and the sensations of the activity.
- Nature Meditation: Sit quietly in your garden and connect with the natural world through your senses.
- Forest Bathing: Even in a small garden, you can practice forest bathing by focusing on the sights, sounds, and smells of nature



OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES IN ASHBURTON

Ashburton Walks



A document produced by the Ashburton town council highlighting walks in Ashburton

 <https://ashburton.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Ashburton-Walks.pdf>

Ashburton Growing Space

- Community group involved in growing food
- Based in the Ashburton Branch of the Royal British Legion.



https://devonconnect.org/profile/ashburton_282

Miles without Stiles



- Stile-free accessible routes across Dartmoor
- Suitable for those with limited mobility, including all-terrain powered mobility scooters
- Route maps available to download and print

 <https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/enjoy-dartmoor/outdoor-activities/accessible-dartmoor>

Woodland Trust Find a Wood

Use the search tool to look for woodland areas near you that you can explore



 https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/find-woods/#name=Ashburton%20Industrial%20Estate%2C%20Ross-on-Wye%2C%20England&lng=-2.5725&lat=51.9153&type=location&id=local_vdpid%3A%225471595601130946577%22

Ashburton Antiques Trail



Ashburton has the highest concentration of antiquity stores in England! Get yourself an Antiques Trail Map to see various stores highlighted and get a little walk in too!

 <https://www.ashburtonantiquetrail.co.uk/>

Ashburton Walking Trails

- Ashburton Down (1.5h walk from Ashburton, 6.5km)
- Terrace Walk (35 min walk, 2.57km)
- The 10 Commandments (80mins, 2.7km)
- Bowden Hill (40mins walk, 1.7km)
- Pennsland Lane (2h walk, 6.6 km)

Click the link below for more information and directions for these trails

 <https://www.travelonthebrain.net/ashburton-devon-uk-dartmoor/>

Druid Wood



- Volunteer to help in edible/medicinal orchard
- Planting, weeding, mulching trees, shrubs & herbs & woodland work
- More community groups available from spring
- Requires a reasonable amount of fitness

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This page has been created by 4th year medical students at the University of Plymouth as part of a Quality Improvement project. To further improve this resource we would appreciate if you could fill out this brief questionnaire to help understand how useful you found this resource! Click the link below to complete the questionnaire!

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfuVHhSdrMzAXeCoMX60zSFkub_3ENzsE6pGML2wsiK_oQwiQ/viewform?usp=sf_link