

sustainably me

Your Nature Journal

Growing wellbeing through mindful reflection

Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Why Keep a Nature Journal?

Long before cameras and smartphones, explorers, artists and naturalists carried notebooks.

Charles Darwin filled his journals with observations that changed our understanding of life on Earth.

Beatrix Potter sketched fungi and woodland plants long before she became one of Britain's best-loved authors.

John Muir recorded his experiences of forests with such vivid detail that his writing helped inspire the creation of national parks.

Today, nature journaling has found a new purpose—not only as a way to record wildlife, but as a simple practice that encourages mindfulness, gratitude and deeper connection with the natural world.

Research suggests that feeling connected to nature is associated with improved psychological wellbeing and greater pro-environmental behaviours. Forest bathing may strengthen this sense of connection, particularly when combined with mindful observation and reflection.

A journal doesn't need to be artistic.

It simply needs to be honest.

The Tree Journal

Visit the same tree over several weeks.

Notice how it changes.

Notice how you change.

The relationship you develop with one tree often becomes a relationship with the wider landscape.

Over time, many people begin to notice details that previously passed unnoticed:

- ☐ birds nesting
- ☐ buds opening
- ☐ bark changing after rain
- ☐ insects emerging
- ☐ fungi appearing
- ☐ shifting light
- ☐ seasonal colours

As your awareness grows, so too can your sense of belonging within nature.

Today's Woodland Visit

Date: _____

Location: _____

Weather:

- ☐ Sunny
- ☐ Cloudy

☐ Rain

☐ Mist

☐ Windy

☐ Frost

Time of day

☐ Dawn

☐ Morning

☐ Afternoon

☐ Evening

Before My Walk

Today my mind feels...

☐ Busy

☐ Calm

☐ Tired

☐ Hopeful

☐ Anxious

☐ Energised

☐ Curious

One word describing how I feel:

After My Walk

Now I feel...

☐ Relaxed

- ☐ Peaceful
- ☐ Inspired
- ☐ Refreshed
- ☐ Grounded
- ☐ More connected
- ☐ Grateful

What changed?

The Five Senses Reflection

Rather than writing long paragraphs, simply notice.

I Saw...

Five beautiful things.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

I Heard...

Three sounds.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I Felt...

Textures.

Temperature.

Movement.

Wind.

Rain.

Sunlight.

Write one sentence describing the experience.

I Smelled...

Earth.

Leaves.

Flowers.

Rain.

Wood.

Fresh air.

Anything else?

I Noticed...

Something I never noticed before.

Why does noticing matter?

Mindfulness encourages us to pay attention intentionally and without judgement.

Forest bathing combines this mindful awareness with time in natural environments.

Studies suggest that this combination may help people feel more connected to nature—a quality linked with wellbeing and, in many studies, with stronger intentions to care for the environment. Researchers continue to investigate exactly how these relationships develop and which activities are most effective.

A Moment of Gratitude

Gratitude shifts our attention from what is missing to what is already present.

Recent research has explored whether gratitude exercises focused on nature can strengthen nature connectedness and wellbeing. While results are still emerging, participants often reported becoming more aware of the natural world and thinking about it in new ways through regular gratitude journaling.

Today I am grateful for...

Weekly Reflection

What did this tree teach me today?

Where do I need deeper roots?

Think about stability.

Support.

Values.

Home.

What am I ready to let go of?

Like autumn leaves...

What no longer serves you?

What strength am I growing?

Trees grow quietly.

Progress isn't always visible.

What strength is growing within you?

One small action I'll take for nature this week

- ☐ Plant something
- ☐ Pick up litter
- ☐ Walk instead of drive
- ☐ Feed birds
- ☐ Reduce waste
- ☐ Spend another 20 minutes outdoors
- ☐ Something else:

Nature Sketch

(Leave one-third of the page blank with a simple frame.)

Draw one leaf.

Or one feather.

Or one acorn.

Or simply the outline of your tree.

Remember...

This isn't an art competition.

It's an exercise in noticing.

Editorial note

These pages are intentionally interactive. Rather than simply reading about nature, readers are encouraged to build an ongoing relationship with a single tree, combining observation, gratitude, sketching, and reflection. This supports the journal's overall theme: sustaining ourselves by deepening our connection with the natural world while keeping the claims aligned with current evidence.

Growing Like a Tree

Bringing the wisdom of the forest into everyday life

The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit. — Often attributed to Nelson Henderson

The Forest Doesn't End When You Go Home

One of the greatest misconceptions about forest bathing is that its benefits are confined to the time we spend outdoors. In reality, the woodland can continue to shape our thinking long after we leave.

Perhaps you've noticed it yourself.

You return from a walk feeling calmer.

Conversations become easier.

Problems that seemed overwhelming begin to feel manageable.

Your breathing remains slower.

Your mind feels less crowded.

These moments matter.

Wellbeing is rarely transformed by one dramatic event. More often, it grows through small, repeated experiences that gradually influence how we think, feel and respond to the world around us.

Just as a tree grows one ring at a time, our wellbeing is built through consistent, gentle

practices rather than perfection.

What Trees Can Teach Us

Nature has always been one of our greatest teachers.

Although trees never speak, they demonstrate qualities that many of us are trying to cultivate in our own lives.

Roots – Stay Grounded

A tree's roots are hidden beneath the surface.

They provide stability, nourishment and resilience.

When storms arrive, healthy roots help the tree remain standing.

Our own roots are the people, places, values and routines that help us feel secure.

Reflection

What keeps you grounded when life becomes difficult?

Trunk – Build Strength Slowly

Trees don't become strong overnight.

Their strength develops through years of growth and adaptation.

Our resilience develops in much the same way.

Every challenge overcome becomes another growth ring.

Progress isn't always visible.

But it is still happening.

Branches – Stay Curious

Branches constantly reach towards light.

They explore new directions.

Some flourish.

Some break.

New ones appear.

Growth is rarely linear.

Life isn't either.

Ask yourself:

Where am I being invited to grow?

Leaves – Learn to Let Go

Every autumn, deciduous trees release their leaves.

They don't cling to what no longer serves them.

Letting go creates space for renewal.

Sometimes we also need to release:

- expectations
- perfectionism
- guilt
- old habits
- unnecessary busyness

Letting go is not giving up.

It is making room for new growth.

Seeds – Small Actions Matter

A mighty oak begins as a single acorn.

The same principle applies to sustainable living.

Meaningful change rarely begins with grand gestures.

It begins with one small choice.

One mindful walk.

One reusable bottle.

One conversation.

One act of kindness.

One tree planted.

Small actions, repeated often, shape our future.

Research Spotlight

Nature and Daily Wellbeing

Many studies suggest that regular contact with green spaces may be more beneficial than occasional visits.

This doesn't always require a large forest.

Researchers have explored a wide range of nature-based activities, including:

- ☐ walking in local parks
- ☐ gardening
- ☐ sitting beneath a tree
- ☐ listening to birdsong
- ☐ observing seasonal change
- ☐ caring for plants at home

The evidence suggests that regular engagement with nearby nature can support wellbeing and

encourage healthier lifestyle habits, although individual experiences vary.

Bring Nature Into Everyday Life

You don't need hours of free time.

Small moments count.

Monday

Drink your morning tea outside.

Tuesday

Walk beneath trees during your lunch break.

Wednesday

Notice one bird.

Thursday

Watch the sunset.

Friday

Leave your phone behind for a ten-minute walk.

Saturday

Visit your favourite tree.

Sunday

Write three things nature gave you this week.

Simple practices repeated consistently can become powerful rituals.

Nature at Home

Not everyone has easy access to woodland.

That's okay.

Research into green social prescribing increasingly recognises that connection with nature can take many forms, from community gardens and local parks to bringing natural elements into homes, workplaces and healthcare settings. Forestry England has also developed virtual forest resources for people who cannot easily access outdoor spaces.

Ideas include:

- Open a window and listen to birds.
- Grow herbs on a windowsill.
- Display seasonal flowers or foliage.
- Spend time caring for houseplants.
- Watch clouds.
- Sit beneath the nearest tree.

Nature is often closer than we think.

Workbook

My Wellbeing Tree

ROOTS

The people who support me...

TRUNK

My greatest strengths...

BRANCHES

Dreams I'm reaching towards...

LEAVES

Things I am grateful for...

SEEDS

One small action I'll take this week...

Nature Intention

This week I will...

- ☐ Spend 20 minutes outdoors
- ☐ Visit the same tree again
- ☐ Walk without my phone
- ☐ Plant something
- ☐ Learn the name of one tree
- ☐ Reduce waste
- ☐ Support a local conservation project
- ☐ Create my own intention

