Blossom and Stardust



FUNGI DETECTIVES

Mushrooms can pop up overnight and vanish by morning. Beneath our feet, a hidden world of fungi is busy recycling the forest and connecting the trees.

Take one step each week (or as it suits you), and this study fills your November with hands-on adventures. They'll be learning science, nature and observation skills, all through play.



EXPLORE

Poem
Fungi Hunt
My Fungi Find

DISCOVER

What Are Fungi?
Fungi ID
The Wood Wide Web

CREATE

Decomposition Jar
(Tip: set this up in week 1 so it has time to work!)
Spore Printing

PLAY

Fungi Facts to WOW
Fungi Bingo

CHECK THE LIBRARY FOR

'Fungi Grow' by Maria Gianferrari
'The Mushroom Fan Club' by Elise Gravel
'Fungarium' by Ester Gaya & Katie Scott (lovely for older ones)



10 MINUTE WIN

Step outside and find one fungus. Crouch down low and peek underneath. Does it have gills or tiny holes? Draw it on your "My Fungi Find" page.

FUNGI HUNTING



3 Different Mushrooms



A Rotten Log



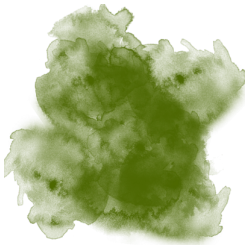
Fungi on a Tree



Mushroom Gills



A Tiny Mushroom



Something Slimy



The Biggest Mushroom you can find



Mushrooms growing in a Circle



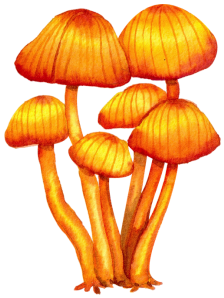
A half eaten Mushroom



A Rotten Smell



Fungi growing in a Dark Spot



A Colourful Mushroom

SHAGGY INK CAP

"Coprinus comatus"



DESCRIPTION

Looks like a white, shaggy soldier standing to attention. Appears in grassy areas, roadsides, lawns and parks. As it ages it dissolves itself from the bottom up into a black inky liquid.

FACT

The ink cap literally digests itself. It produces enzymes that turn its own flesh into black ink. Artists have used this ink to write and draw for centuries.

FLY AGARIC

"Amanita muscaria"

Poisonous. Never touch or taste.



DESCRIPTION

Bright red cap covered in white spots. Grows under birch and pine trees in woodland. Can usually be found from September through to November.

FACT

The white spots are actually the remnants of a veil that covered the whole mushroom when it was young. Rain washes them off, so older fly agarics can look plain red.

LEARNING SUMMARY - FUNGI DETECTIVES

A quick guide to the learning in this study, for your records, LA report or setting's planning. Adapt it to describe your own child's learning.

SUBJECTS COVERED

Science · English · Maths · Art & Design · Wellbeing · Outdoor learning

WHAT WE EXPLORED

We discovered that fungi are neither plants nor animals, but have a kingdom of their own. We learned how mushrooms are just the "fruit" of a hidden network of threads called mycelium, and how this Wood Wide Web connects trees underground so they can share water and nutrients. We found out how fungi act as nature's recyclers, breaking down dead leaves and wood into new soil. We identified four British fungi (the shaggy ink cap, fly agaric, jelly ear and puffball) and learned that we look at fungi with our eyes, not our hands.

SCIENCE SKILLS PRACTISED

Observing closely · identifying and naming fungi · classifying living things · making and recording predictions · carrying out a simple experiment over time · comparing results · recording through drawing

OTHER LEARNING

English: Reading and performing poetry, and learning new scientific vocabulary.
Maths: Counting and comparing on the fungi hunt, and noting change over days and weeks.
Art & Design: Making spore prints and detailed observational drawings.
Wellbeing & safety: Slowing down to notice small details, and learning to stay safe around wild fungi.

KEY WORDS

Fungi · kingdom · mushroom · mycelium · spores · gills · decompose · recycle · Wood Wide Web · poisonous

IDEAS FOR EVIDENCE

Photos from the fungi hunt · the decomposition jar, with notes on what changed · spore prints · "My Fungi Find" drawings and descriptions · a recording of the poem being read aloud · fungi bingo

LINKS TO THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM (OPTIONAL):

Y1 Working Scientifically: observing closely and recording
Y2 Living Things & Habitats: living, dead and never alive, and microhabitats
Y3 Plants: how roots take in water and nutrients
Y4 Living Things & Habitats: grouping living things
Y6 Living Things & Habitats: classifying living things, including micro-organisms
EYFS: Understanding the World · Expressive Arts & Design · Communication & Language.

EXAMPLE FOR YOUR REPORT

"In the Fungi Detectives study, [name] learned that fungi belong to their own kingdom, separate from plants and animals. [He/She/They] went on a fungi hunt, identified the fly agaric, shaggy ink cap, jelly ear and puffball, and learned how to stay safe by looking but never touching. [Name] set up a decomposition jar and recorded how leaves and fruit skin changed over two weeks, made spore prints from a mushroom cap, and learned how fungi connect trees underground through the Wood Wide Web."