

For adults and children in the garden or outdoor area

Ice windows and ice mobiles

Natural England wants to give a million children the chance to discover the outdoors. The natural world is a fascinating place to explore and our natural habitats together with the creatures and plants that live there can provide endless sources of fun. From your own back yard to the wilds of our national nature reserves, now is the time to make the most of the outdoors and go wild!

Together with Fiona Danks and Jo Schofield (www.goingwild.net), authors of Nature's Playground, Go Wild and Make it Wild (www.franceslincoln.com), we've produced these fantastic activity sheets to give you plenty of ideas of what you can get up to, what are you waiting for?



Have you ever noticed leaves or seeds trapped in the ice on frozen puddles? This was the inspiration for making ice windows and mobiles. Encasing natural materials such as berries, seeds and winter flowers in ice reveals them in new and unexpected ways. Hang ice windows and mobiles up outside the window or on a branch and enjoy until the weather warms up! They may melt a little during the day and then freeze again at night so you can watch how they change.

You will need

- Seasonal materials collected from the garden – perhaps evergreen leaves and needles, last autumn's fallen leaves, berries and seeds, winter flowers or some of next spring's catkins.
- For the mobiles - saucers and jar lids; pastry cutters of various shapes; and a tray
- For windows – large plastic bowls or buckets
- String
- A deep freeze – just in case it's not cold enough outside

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Making ice windows

- Pour some water into a bucket or large bowl
- Fold an 18 inch/half metre length of string in half; hang the loop outside the bowl then place the two loose ends round the inside of the bowl as shown.
- Arrange the gathered natural materials in the water; you want them to be trapped on the surface so either; use materials that float or just put a small amount of water in the bottom of the bowl.
- Leave outside overnight – ice windows form when it's not quite cold enough for the water to freeze solid. In very cold weather, just put a shallow layer of water in the bottom of a bowl or bucket.
- The next morning, place the bowl in some warm water to help release your ice window. Pour some water into a bucket or large bowl
- Fold an 18 inch/half metre length of string in half; hang the loop outside the bowl then place the two loose ends round the inside of the bowl as shown.



Making Mobiles

- Place the chosen natural items in the saucers, inside a pastry cutter, or arrange them on upturned jam jar lids instead.
- Carefully place the containers in a row on a tray.
- Lay a piece of string along the row of saucers or lids, linking them together.
- Pour water into each saucer and/or lid, making sure the natural materials and the string are submerged beneath the water
- If the temperature outside is below freezing, place the tray outdoors where it will not be disturbed. Alternatively, place them in a deep freeze.
- When the mobiles have frozen, carefully remove the icy discs from their containers; you may need to use a little hot water to do this.



Safety tips

- Make sure fingers don't get stuck on very cold ice!