

Woodland activity idea

Simple ideas to inspire groups to engage with woods in a safe and fun way

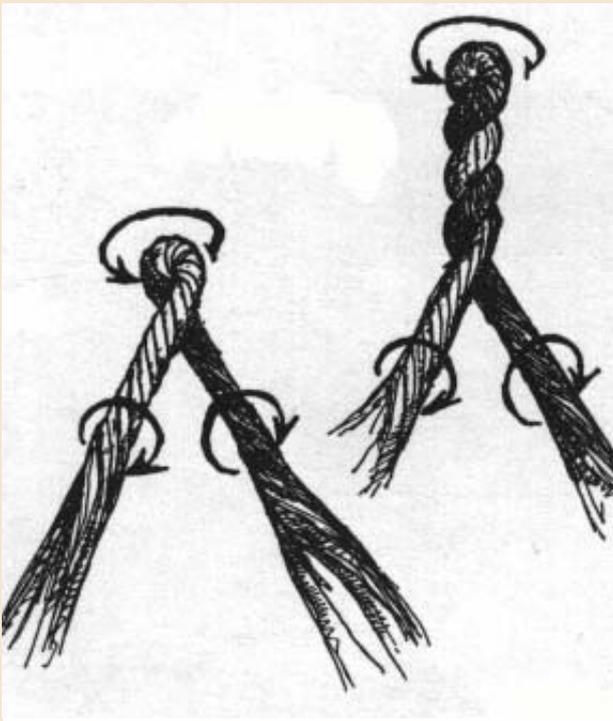
7) Making nettle cordage and drinking nettle tea!

Description of the activity / overview	<p>Gathering Nettles to make Cordage or bracelets (can adjust to suit target audience) This is a good session as an introduction to Bush craft and one that is easy to run with some practice.</p> <p>Making Nettle tea with the group at the same time adds another dimension to the session (sensory) and often brings about nostalgic discussions between the participants.</p>
Permissions needed	Permission to use the woodland and fire pit permission (a fire Wok would also work for this activity)
Timescale	Works well in a 2 hour session
Equipment	Tripod, tin pan for boiling water, cups for tea, gloves, secateurs, hand sanitizer or sanitizer wipes as the nettle stems can become quite sticky when splitting.
Who's enjoyed it in the past?	Mental health groups, Age Cymru, Drug and alcohol rehabilitation.
Leader skills and knowledge needed to do the activity (minimum and desired)	<p>Minimum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe fire lighting/use• To have carried out the activity before they do it with a group• First aid <p>Desired</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Previous experience of running a bush craft session• Knowledge of the folklore surrounding Stinging nettles makes this session even more interesting!

Methodology

1. Give your group an outline of the session: explain the intensity and level of the walk you will be undertaking whilst you look for the nettles and outline your usual health and safety features.
2. Check if anyone in the group has an allergy to nettles.
3. Give out gloves, buckets and scissors to everyone collecting Nettles
4. Look for the nettles (the leader should have visited the woodland recently so they can guide the participants on where to look: the longer ones are better!)
5. Get the group to cut the nettles so they have long stems they will be able to strip with gloves, encourage them to collect the TIPS separately so they can make tea at the end of the session
6. Find an appropriate space to start stripping the nettle leaves and start a fire (this can be done before the session starts if needed) Set up the tripod to act as a 'drying rack' for the nettle fibres and to hand a pot of water for the tea
7. Take the leaves off the stems and using gloves brush up and down the stems to pull off all the stingy hairs, this should be done quite thoroughly so the participants are not stung when they take the gloves off to do the next steps.
8. Gently 'crush' the stems with a piece of wood, especially the growth nodules. without damaging the outer skin.
9. Prise apart the nettle stems and flatten, pull away all the woody interior of the stems and put the remaining fibres on the tripod drying rack.
10. Making the cord requires a loop to be linked around something straight (someone else's thumb or a twig off a tree trunk works!)
11. Time to braid! Gather your nettle fibres and 'twist' either side in the same direction until they start to twirl around each other and continue for the whole length and tie off.
12. For the nettle tea: pick the tips and add 'just off the boil' water and drink!

Key elements	Foraging, lost skills, bush craft, old crafts, natural teas, folklore, Healthy eating.
Online links	<p>Dryad Bushcraft have useful tutorials online</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.naturessecretlarder.co.uk/bushcraft-tutorials/nettle-cordage-tutorial_1.htm • http://www.wildernesscollege.com/cordage.html
Any other considerations	Important to check the woodland you are using has Nettles. This can be done most times of the year although mid to late summer means they will have optimal strength.
Special TIPS!	<p>Useful to chat to the participants about Nettles as it's easy to overlook the fact some might be nervous about handling them (even with gloves.) This is a nice activity to combine with making nettle tea.</p> <p>Look for the nettles before the session starts so you can guide the group where to go</p> <p>The stinging hairs are only found on the underside of the leaves and on the stem, but it is still a good idea to always wear gloves, so as not to put people off nettles!</p>
Thank you to Andrew Thomas of Dryad Bush craft for this session	



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