

SEPTEMBER 2021 - JULY 2022

LEAF HOME SCHOOLERS GUIDE



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Love Organic

LEARNING
ABOUT
FORESTS

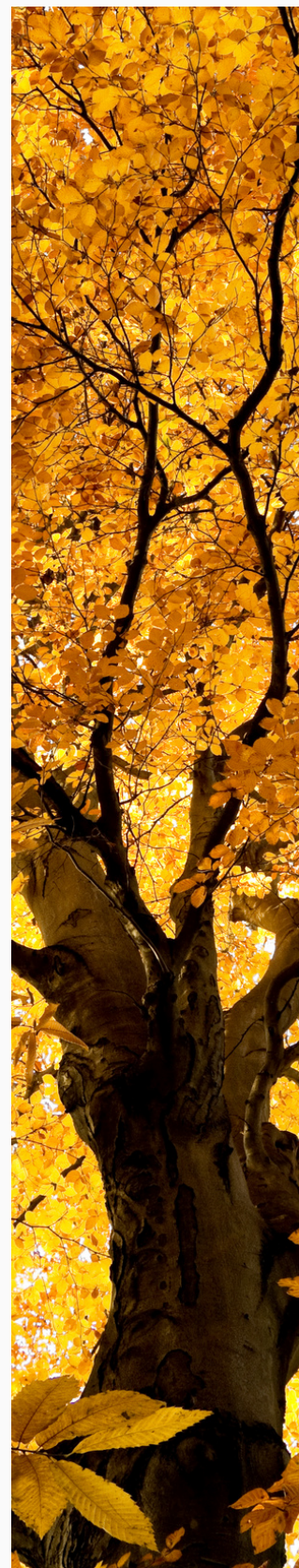


KEEP
BRITAIN
TIDY.

INTRODUCTION TO LEARNING ABOUT FORESTS (LEAF)

SOCIAL MEDIA

#LEAF #LEAFrugi



PURPOSE

Learning About Forests (LEAF) advocates outdoor learning and hands-on experiences, which result in young people getting a deeper and more involved understanding of the natural world.

Now in its 21st year the LEAF programme operates in 28 countries and engages with over 700,000 young people around the world to instil a sense of ownership over their natural surroundings.

HISTORY

LEAF was initiated in 1999 by the Forest in Schools programme in Norway, Sweden and Finland in cooperation with the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). It was officially rolled out as a global award in 2000. The LEAF programme is operated on a national level by the same organisations who manage the Eco-Schools programme. In this case the Eco-Schools England operators at Keep Britain Tidy!

FUNDERS

A huge thank you to our friends at Frugi Organic Cotton Clothing, who are supporting the Learning About Forest (LEAF) programme in England. We are very excited about working with them to help get more families outside reconnecting with and restoring our forest ecosystems.

LEAF GLOBAL AIMS

To see an increased level of awareness and knowledge about the key role forests play for sustainable life on our planet.

To stimulate activities that will help young people achieve an increased level of environmental maturity irrespective of age, experience and previous knowledge.

LEAF GLOBAL GOALS

- Ensure young people experience and observe nature and learn to enjoy the outdoors.
- Develop positive attitudes towards the environment and our forests.
- Provide a general curiosity about nature and human interaction with forests.
- Establish knowledge of ecological webs and a better understanding of nature's processes.
- Realise the connection between human activity and nature.
- Equip young people with the capability of making decisions on environmental issues, teaching them to develop their questioning skills, whilst collecting knowledge and information relevant to making informed decisions.
- Empower young people to take responsibility for their future, teaching that every individual is responsible for their own individual actions.

<https://www.eco-schools.org.uk/eco-projects/learning-about-forests/>

THE LEAF PROGRAMME AND AWARD

It is important to note that the LEAF programme and the LEAF Award are FREE and open to:

- **Registered Eco-Schools**
- **None registered Eco-Schools**
- **Youth groups**
- **Registered home schoolers**

Whilst the focus of the LEAF programme is forest-based ecosystems, the skills and knowledge acquired can be applied to any natural environment: we realise that not every young person has a global forest ecosystem on their doorstep! Therefore we especially welcome those learning and living in urban areas to take part in the programme and connect with nature and ecosystems that exist in their towns and cities

Like Eco-Schools the LEAF programme must be led by young people as they work through the **Forest Cycle** (Seven Steps) for their chosen LEAF Theme. Through planning, leading and monitoring actions, a **Forest Eco-Committee** will change behaviours and raise awareness of the importance of the trees and ecosystems in their local community.

The LEAF programme runs annually with a window for award application in the summer term.

Application window for the LEAF Award opens on 1st June every year. Schools, youth groups and home-schoolers are all able to submit their LEAF Award application via the [online application link on the Eco-Schools website](#) or by attaching to an email and sending to eco-schools@keepbritaintidy.org

The application window for the LEAF Award closes on 31st July every year. The Eco-Schools England Team will be assessing all fully completed LEAF Award applications as and when they are submitted throughout June and July.

E-Certificates (we are saving paper) will be sent via email once a Forest Eco-Committee's LEAF Award application has been assessed to ensure all Forest Cycle and LEAF Theme actions have been undertaken.

The LEAF Programme and Award are free.



FOR THE LEAF PROGRAMME AND AWARD AN 'ECOSYSTEM' CAN INCLUDE BUT IS NOT RESTRICTED TO

FORESTS OR WOODLANDS

SCHOOL GROUNDS

LOCAL PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

ALLOTMENTS

HOME GARDENS

LEAF THEMES

SOCIAL MEDIA

#LEAF #LEAFrugi

The LEAF programme announces a new theme annually based on the recommendations of the Food and Agricultural Organisation's Forestry Department (FAO). Announced on 21st March 2021 this year's theme is:

FORESTS AND RESTORATION

THEMES CHOICE

The LEAF programme is operated thematically therefore participants must pick one Theme to focus on as their Forest Eco-Committee work through the Forest Cycle. Schools, youth groups and home schoolers can choose to work on either the current annual LEAF Theme or previous annual themes, that include:

- **Forests and Biodiversity**
- **Forests and Climate**
- **Forests and Water**
- **Forests and Community**
- **Forests and Products**

EXAMPLES

Here are some simple outlines of the different LEAF Themes, many of which are interconnected. As the LEAF programme is intended to be led by young people, a Forest Eco-Committee may interpret the themes differently, or uniquely and this is definitely something to be encouraged.

Forests and Restoration: This years theme invites you to look at how forest restoration, at any scale can help support climate action and reduce biodiversity loss. This year also focuses on the well-being element of forests: investigating and raising awareness of the healing effects that forests and trees have on us.

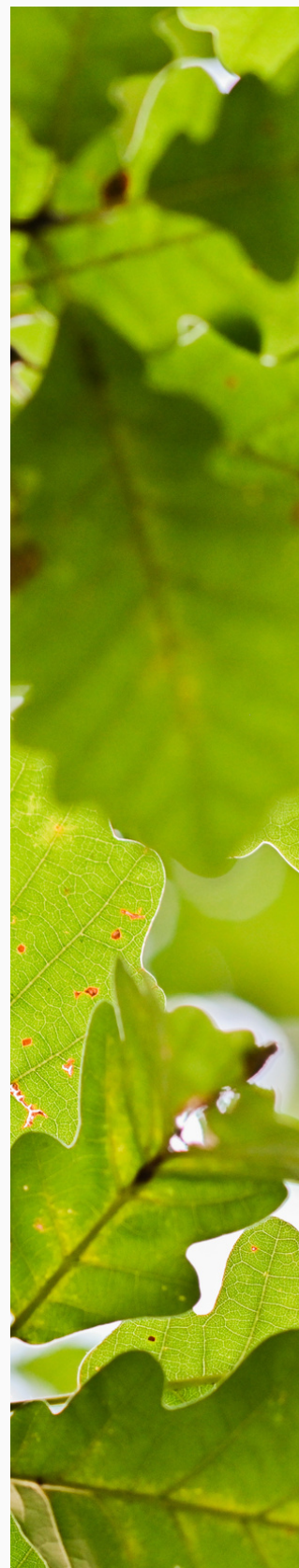
Forests and Climate: Forests and trees are the lungs of our planet and act as major carbon stores. If you are aiming to reduce your carbon footprint LEAF encourages you to research the impacts of deforestation and think of ways you could help reduce this. You could also investigate the effect of trees on local microclimates too.

Forests and Community: Forest and trees are of great importance to people and their communities. We have always depended upon them for our survival yet they are decreasing at an alarming rate– only 30% of the Earth surface is now covered by forests. Through LEAF find ways to make a green space a key part of the local community again, whether a park, allotment or a single tree!

Forests and Biodiversity: All forests offer a huge diversity of habitats for plants, animals and insects. However these biologically diverse ecosystems are under threat both here in the UK and overseas. LEAF encourages you to investigate why forests and trees are so important for local biodiversity and what you can do to protect them.

Forests and Water: Forest play a vital role in the water cycle, they reduce flooding and improve water quality. LEAF encourages you to think about the relationship between trees and water and how you can help others understand these important links.

Forests and Products: We have always depended on forests for resources; our ancestors were hunter-gatherers and now we use forests (and their ecosystems) for a huge variety of resources from timber to medicines. For LEAF why not raise awareness of why forest are vital to our survival and find ways to sustainably use these resources.



LEAF SUB THEMES

If you and your Forest Eco-Committee are experienced and would like to enhance your main LEAF Theme work you can also choose to work on one of the optional LEAF sub-themes.

These sub-themes may also be interesting for older members of your Forest Eco-Committee, who are hoping to expand their knowledge of forests, or Eco-Schools holding multiple Green Flags, who would like to expand previous topic actions for Eco-Schools School Grounds or Biodiversity topics.

Forest Laws and Codes

A very important part of looking after our forest ecosystems, green spaces and trees are the policies, laws and codes in place (in England and around the world) that are designed to protect them. Understanding how these laws and codes work, and the key stakeholders who shape and influence them, is vital. With this sub theme LEAF encourages you to research local and national legislation that may influence the main LEAF theme you have chosen to work on.

Forests Myths

The word 'Forest' means different things to different people depending on factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and race. With this sub-theme LEAF encourages you to investigate the impact forests and trees have had on culture and how this has influenced our attitudes towards them.

Forest Creativity and Innovation

For thousands of years forests and their ecosystems have inspired humans across the arts and sparked technological advancements. Choose this LEAF sub-theme to embrace your Forest Eco-Committees' inventiveness and let their imaginations run wild.

Important Point: Regardless of which LEAF Theme is picked, your Forest Eco-Committee must ensure their work includes links to:

- Ecology
- Economy
- Society
- Culture



ECOLOGY: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE LIVING AND NONE LIVING WITHIN FOREST ECOSYSTEMS. SUCH AS: SOIL, WATER, FOOD WEBS AND THE CARBON CYCLE.

ECONOMY: HOW FOREST ECOSYSTEMS LINK TO MONEY, BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY. SUCH AS: SUSTAINABLE TIMBER PRODUCTION AND TRADE.

SOCIETY: THE EFFECT FOREST ECOSYSTEMS HAVE ON HOW WE BEHAVE AND FEEL. SUCH AS: OUR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING.

CULTURE: THE ROLE FOREST ECOSYSTEMS HAVE IN OUR NATIONAL AND LOCAL TRADITIONS. SUCH AS ART, LITERATURE AND FOLKLORE.

LEAF FOREST CYCLE

The Forest Cycle helps your Forest Eco-Committee to implement, manage and evaluate the work they plan to carry out on their chosen LEAF Theme to raise awareness of forests ecosystems and outdoor education in their community.

The Forest Cycle stages do not have to be carried out in the order set out over the following pages. You, and your Forest Eco-Committees, might decide to adopt a more holistic approach to the LEAF programme and overlap different stages of the cycle. For instance, you may want to decide on what actions you would like to add to your Action Plan before deciding on the additional Theme questions you would like to add to your Environmental Forest Awareness Review. You may also decide to create your forest Eco-Code, before starting your theme actions: this may help engage and motivate others to join you as you work through the programme!

The LEAF programme is flexible the only rules are that you **pick one LEAF Theme** to work on and have addressed each of the Forest Cycle stages before applying for your LEAF award anytime between 1st June and 31st July every year.

Those of you who are registered Eco-Schools will notice the 'Forest Cycle' follows the same framework as the Eco-Schools Seven Steps. We also understand that the LEAF Coordinator in a school is highly likely be the Eco-Schools Eco-Coordinator. As we do not want to give individuals additional work to complete, please remember that you can use your LEAF work as topic evidence, when applying for or renewing your Eco-Schools Green Flag. In that way, you can achieve two international, school awards with one set of actions- a great way to recognise the hard work you, and the young people you have worked with, have completed.

Join the LEAF programme via the [registration page on the Eco-Schools England website](#). The person registering on behalf of the school, youth group or home-schooled family must be aged over 18. You are able to register to join the LEAF programme at any point up until the LEAF award application window opens on 1st June each year.

Following pages explain what to do for each of the Forest Cycle stages for HOME SCHOOLERS



FOREST ECO-COMMITTEE

The 'Forest Eco-Committee' should aim to lead and direct all areas of the forest cycle as they work through the programme towards their annual LEAF Award. The Forest Eco-Committee are also responsible for choosing and working on the LEAF Theme.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

Register with the LEAF Programme.

An individual aged over 18, must take responsibility for registering on the LEAF programme via the Eco-Schools England website for their family. All home schoolers must be registered with your Local Education Authority.

Form a Forest Eco-Committee.

Once your LEAF Coordinator has registered to take part in the LEAF programme you will need to form your Forest Eco-Committee that will take ownership of the LEAF programme. The LEAF programme is open to all ages and your Forest Eco-Committee can simply be your whole family or multiple families if part of a larger, local home schooling network. Importantly your Forest Eco-Committee must be 'led' by the children in your family!

Pick a LEAF Theme.

Your Forest Eco-Committee must then pick ONE of the LEAF Themes that they would like to work on and raise awareness of, through the LEAF programme. Whichever Theme they pick your Forest Eco-Committee must remember to include actions that link to: Ecology, Economy, Society and Culture.



ECO-COMMITTEE

ENVIRONMENTAL FOREST AWARENESS REVIEW

The Forest Eco-Committee must conduct an Environmental Forest Awareness Review at the start of the LEAF programme to assess initial awareness of the chosen LEAF Theme in their local community.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

Create an Environmental Forest Awareness Review

Once your Forest Eco-Committee have chosen their LEAF Theme they will need to create an Environmental Forest Awareness Review to help them understand what others in their community or home schooling network know about their chosen LEAF Theme. The responses from this will help them to decide what actions they need to include in their Action Plan to help raise awareness of their LEAF Theme.

The Environmental Forest Awareness Review your Forest Eco-Committee create must contain the 4 compulsory forest ecosystem question listed below.

Your Forest Eco-Committee must also write their own additional questions relating to their chosen LEAF Theme. We would suggest to write no more than 5 additional questions, and have included some examples on the next page. These additional questions can be as simple or as complex as your Forest Eco-Committee like depending on the age range of the people they would like to survey.

Compulsory Environmental Forest Awareness Review Questions

- 1) Give one reason why forests and trees are important for:
 - The Planet
 - People
 - Plants and Animals
- 2) Name four different UK tree species.
- 3) List three threats to forests and the animals that live in them.
- 4) List three ways we can protect forests and trees.



ENVIRONMENTAL FOREST AWARENESS REVIEW

Examples of additional Environmental Forest Review Questions

Forests and Restoration: How many trees can you count on your way to the local park?

Forests and Biodiversity: Can you name three different birds?

Forests and Climate: How do trees help to make oxygen?

Forests and Water: How do trees take water out of the ground?

Forests and Community: What is your favourite flower and why?

Forests and Products: How many items of wood can you find in your home?

Distribute your Environmental Forest Awareness Review

Your Forest Eco-Committee must then decide how they will distribute their Environment Forest Awareness Review with others based on your setting, this could be via:

- A letter to family and friends.
- Sharing with neighbours or 'friends of' groups.
- Send the review to other members of your home schooling network.
- Place the review in a local community venue such as a refillable shop or library.
- A link to the survey on a blog.
- Using social media.

Conduct Your Environmental Forest Awareness Review

There are no minimum or maximum number of Environmental Forest Awareness Reviews that need to be answered, however the more responses you can gather at the start of your Forest Cycle the more effective your actions will be. If at the start people are unable to answer your questions because they do not know the answers please do not worry—this just means your LEAF actions are even more important to help others learn to love forests too!

Important Point: After your Forest Eco-Committee have carried out some or all of their actions they must ask (ideally same people) to complete the Environmental Forest Awareness Review again to assess if their action plan was successful for the Monitoring and Evaluation section of the Forest Cycle.



FOREST ACTION PLAN

The Forest Eco-Committee will carry out actions of their choice to help them raise awareness of their chosen LEAF Theme in their local community.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

Review the Responses from your First Environmental Forest Awareness Review

Use the responses you have received from your first Environmental Forest Awareness Review to help you consider what actions you and your Forest Eco-Committee would like to take to raise awareness of your chosen LEAF Theme in your local community and network. If you have decided to work on one of the optional LEAF sub-themes remember to include ideas for this in your Forest Action Plan too.

Write your in your Forest Action Plan

Remember to include:

- Actions for your LEAF Theme linked to: Ecology, Economy, Society and Culture (see definitions on page 5).
- Actions that you have previously completed as a family that you think were suitable for the LEAF Theme you have chosen and will be working on again this year.
- Actions that family members may already be completing to achieve badges and awards for youth groups such as the Scouts. Other projects and campaigns that you have been working together as a family on for organisations and charities such as RSPB or the Wildlife Trust, if they help raise awareness of your LEAF Theme and can be linked to ecology, economy, society or culture.

Over the next few pages, you will find ideas for possible LEAF actions, each aimed at raising awareness. These ideas are followed by a blank template of a LEAF Forest Action Plan that your Forest Eco-Committee can use. It is very important to note that your action plan is a working document. Ideas and actions to raise awareness may not go to plan, you may have to adapt and change your actions once started – this is all acceptable as long as your Forest Eco-Committee are the ones leading the actions!



FOREST ACTION PLAN

We have not linked these Forest Action Plan ideas to a particular LEAF Theme as different Forest Eco-Committees may interpret them differently depending on their knowledge and understanding of the Theme(s). We have however highlighted if the action links to: Ecology, Economy, Society or Culture

1. Become 'Guardians of the Garden'. Depending on interest and studies, your Forest Eco-Committee could become Super Heroes who protect and promote different parts of your garden ecosystem such as the flowers, the pollinators, the soil or birds.

Ecology

2. Carry out a project to investigate what things in your home are made from 'trees'. Have these items been sustainable sourced? **Economy**

3. Get planting – this could be anything from a small herb garden to tree saplings in your garden or even local green space. **Ecology & Society**

4. Join our global LEAF family and take part in our international Gaia 20:30 campaign, working through LEAF actions with Forest Eco-Committees from around the world! **Ecology, Society and Culture**

5. This spring carry out a Family Forest Fashion week or dressing up day. Use nature to inspire your clothing patterns and designs (remember not to buy new clothes for this, use what you have already have). **Ecology & Culture**

6. Weather and lack of suitable clothing are a big reason why many families in the UK are reluctant to go outdoors more often. Why not create a set of family outdoor kits that are ready for when you all want to go outside and explore, regardless of the weather! Think about the items you will need to include in these kits, maybe a summer kit with hats and sun cream and a winter kit with gloves and waterproof jackets. **Economy & Society**



FOREST ACTION PLAN

7. Research which trees are native to the UK and then see if you can find them in your local community. When you find them, plot them on a local map with your home in the centre to make a tree trail with interesting facts and information about the plants, animals and insects that live in or around these trees that you could share with family and friends when they come to visit. **Ecology & Society**

8. The national tree of England is the Oak– investigate why this is and hold a day or week-long celebration in honour of the Oak tree. If there are any Oak trees in your local community how can your Forest Eco-Committee show how important these particular trees are during this celebration? **Ecology, Economy, Society & Culture**

9. Carry out a bird count to see which species of birds are living in and around trees in your garden. Have these birds migrated back to the UK for spring and summer? **Ecology & Society**

10. Find out if there is a 'Friends of' group that cares for a local park or green space and see if your Forest Eco-Committee can join. If not, then why not set up your own and invite others to join? A perfect way to increase the size of your Forest Eco-Committee! **Society**

11. Hold a family forest food festival to think about all the different foods we eat that grow in forests. The food festival could focus on fruits that grow on trees and exploring their different tastes. **Ecology, Economy, Society & Culture**

12. Take leaf prints and bark rubbings to create your own local tree identification guide that others can use. **Ecology**

13. Don't forget the insects! Choose an area that you will develop to become a haven for all creatures. Did you know that one of our Eco-Schools currently holds the world record for the largest bug hotel in the world! Can you beat their record? **Ecology**

Important Point: Your Eco-Committee will need to submit a copy of their Forest Action Plan when applying for the LEAF Award. On the following page is a template for an action plan. Please feel free to create your own with your Forest Eco-Committee but remember to include: your LEAF Theme (and Sub-Theme), Ecology, Economic, Society and Culture actions.





FOREST ACTION PLAN

Our LEAF Theme:

Our LEAF Sub Theme:

	Ecology	Economy	Society	Culture
LEAF ACTION				
AIM OF ACTION				
HOW LONG				
WHO WILL HELP				
HOW WE WILL RAISE AWARENES				
HOW WE WILL MONITOR AWARENES				
DID OUR LEAF ACTION WORK!				

FOREST CURRICULUM LINKS

To help 'green' education it is important to try to incorporate your LEAF actions and plans into as many areas of learning at home as possible. Through the LEAF programme the Forest Eco-Committee should aim to make outdoor education the new normal (regardless of the English weather!)

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

Record THREE Examples of Learning Relating to Forest Ecosystems

Your Forest Eco-Committee needs to find and record three examples of learning relating to forest ecosystems. Try to find them from a variety of curriculum areas such as music, numeracy or history.

- Practice counting and colour recognition using flowers and leaves.
- Creating a 'forest' library with all the books your Eco-Committee like that link to your LEAF Theme.
- Make Seasonal nature tables to showcase your nature trophies and finds during your LEAF actions.
- Use recycled materials to make art work or sculptures of your favourite animals.
- Use twigs, leaves, stones and other items to make natural art.
- Find out if the birds in your garden or local park migrate to a different country during the winter months- find this country on a map. Why do you think the birds have flown there?
- Carry out some research into Palm Oil and investigate what food in your kitchen cupboards contains Palm Oil- can you find alternatives?
- If you do not have much green space around your home add some plants to your kitchen and bathroom and find out how to look after them. Write a short story about your new plant friend!
- Practice using nature themed similes or make a list of adjectives to help your describe trees and nature around you.
- Research if there are any special trees, green spaces or plants and animals in your local community – are there any specific laws or codes to protect them? Once you have this information, consider writing a Legal LEAF news article that you can share with others to let them know why these trees, green spaces or plants and animals are so important and how they are legally protected.



FOREST INFORMING AND INVOLVING

The Forest Eco-Committee should try to spread their actions and messages across the local community to help raise awareness of their LEAF theme.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

Decide How to Inform and Involve Others

The main aim of the LEAF programme is to allow young people to raise awareness of the importance of forest ecosystems that are reflected in the different LEAF Themes your Forest Eco-Committee can pick from.

As family, it can feel difficult to have a big impact. However, through the LEAF programme you will be able to spread the word about your actions and encourage others to get involved so that (maybe slowly at first) your Forest Eco-Committee begins to grow as other family members and friends join you and your impacts are not so small any more!

Your Forest Eco-Committee will need to think about the best way for them to let others know about their LEAF Theme actions:

- Family meetings and calls.
- Play dates with your home schooling network, friends and families.
- Making gifts linked to your LEAF Theme to share with those close to you.
- Letters to local community groups, local MP or local businesses.
- LEAF art displays in the windows of your home or local meeting place.
- Family blog.
- Posting on your family social media or sharing updates in family chats.

Remember, circulating and collating responses for your Environmental Forest Awareness Reviews is also part of the Informing and Involving section of the Forest Cycle!

Once you have chosen how you are going to Inform & Involve others, it's time to do so! Don't forget to include Eco-Schools England and Frugi in any of your social media LEAF posts and remember to use

#LEAF and #LEAFrugi



FOREST MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The goal of the LEAF programme is to allow young people to lead behavioural change and increase awareness of their LEAF Theme. The Forest Eco-Committee should carry out a second Environmental Forest Awareness Review to assess if their LEAF actions have been successful.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

Conduct Your Environmental Forest Awareness Review for a Second Time

Once your Forest Eco-Committee have completed the tasks on their Forest Action Plan it is time to see if they have been successful in raising awareness of their chosen LEAF Theme in your local community and home schooling network. In order to do this your Forest Eco-Committee will need to send out their Environmental Forest Awareness Review again– ideally to the same people. Making sure to keep all the same questions as before and checking if there are any noticeable responses in the answers they receive.

Please do not worry if your second responses are not what you expected this could be for a wide variety of reasons that are beyond the control of your Forest Eco-Committee, especially if you were not able to ask the same people due to restrictions. Don't forget to share your results with everyone who has taken part and helped you work through the Forest Cycle too.

Think About the success of your LEAF Actions

For your LEAF Award application we will ask you and your Forest Eco-Committee if you think your LEAF Theme (and sub-theme if picked) actions have been a success. As the LEAF programme is designed to be youth led it is very important for us to hear how your Forest Eco-Committee felt their actions have gone and how they may wish to expand or adapt similar actions again next year. Will they continue to work on the same LEAF Theme but with different actions? Will they add a sub-theme and expand on the actions they have done? Will they pick an entirely new LEAF Theme and new actions. It is their choice!



**MONITORING
& EVALUATING**

FOREST ECO-CODE

The Forest Eco-Committee should decide on a Forest Eco-Code that promotes and celebrates their LEAF Theme actions in the local community.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

Create a Forest Eco-Code

Your Forest Eco-Committee and those who have helped with your LEAF Theme actions will need to create a forest code that symbolises the work and achievements you have made whilst participating in the LEAF programme. Remember, your Forest Eco-Code must link to the LEAF Theme your Forest Eco-Committee have chosen. There are no rules for this section, only that you have fun and get creative.

NOW APPLY FOR YOUR LEAF AWARD!

In order to apply for the LEAF Award home schoolers must complete the LEAF Application Document (that can be found on the same page of the Eco-Schools website as this guide) and upload to the LEAF Award application form on the [Eco-Schools England website](#).

The LEAF Award is FREE thanks to our generous funders Frugi.

The LEAF Award application window opens on 1st June and closes on 31st July every year.

The LEAF programme and award are annual: registered homes schoolers will need to re-register at the start of every September in order to reapply for their LEAF Award each year.

The LEAF Award expires after one year, if home schooler does not re-register and submit a new LEAF Award application during the annual application window they are no longer an active LEAF Programme participant.

When a home schooler achieves the LEAF Award they will be sent an e-certificate and an electronic copy of the LEAF logo to use in recognition of their 'tree'mendous achievement!

