

Out and About

Wild blackberries (or brambles) are ripe and ready to pick in autumn. And canal towpaths and riverbanks are a great place to look for them!



Try this activity if you are working towards any of the following badges: Seasons; Out and About; Culture; Naturalist; Environmentalist.

Blackberry Mess

Blackberries can be used to make all sorts of homemade things to eat from chutneys to crumbles. Try Blackberry Mess - a scrumptious pudding that doesn't need any cooking.

You will need

- about 250 g of blackberries
- 1 teaspoon of caster sugar
- 1 teaspoon of lemon juice
- 250 g of whipping cream, or yogurt, or a mixture of both
- 2 small meringue nests from a packet
- 2 bowls
- a sieve to wash and drain the blackberries
- a fork



To make

- 1** Wash the blackberries and take out any leaves and stalks. Drain them well.
- 2** Put them in a bowl and press them lightly with a fork to make the juice run a bit.
- 3** Add the lemon juice and sugar.
- 4** If you are using cream, whip it with a fork in another bowl. It needs to be thick but still soft.
- 5** If you are using half cream and yogurt, mix the yogurt in now.
- 6** Break up the meringue nests into rough chunks.
- 7** Mix the blackberries, the cream/yogurt and the meringue together. Yum!



Blackberries were once used to make mauve, dark blue and purple-blue dyes for cloth.



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Out and About

One of the best things about autumn is searching for conkers – the seeds of the horse chestnut tree. Depending where you live, conkers are also known as cheggies, hongkongs, obbley-onkers and cobs.

Do conkers have a local name where you live?

To make

Killer Conkers



- Select your conker carefully.
- Make a hole exactly through the centre with a skewer. You may need to ask an adult to help.
- Cut a length of strong string (or a shoe lace) long enough to wind twice round your hand and hang down by about 20 cms.
- Thread the string or shoe lace through the hole and tie a big knot in one end to make sure the conker doesn't drop off and smash.



To play

- 1 The law of conkers is that it is better to strike first.
- 2 Hold your conker between your thumb and forefinger like a catapult. Swing it down on to your opponent's conker. If you hit it the other player has their turn. If you miss you may be allowed another turn.
- 3 When one conker breaks into pieces so that nothing remains on the string, the winning conker becomes a 'one-er'.

Want to know more?

Click on canalrivertrust.org.uk to:

- Find the nearest canal in your area. Then go for a 30 minute towpath walk in autumn with an adult you know and see what fallen natural objects you can find. Don't forget to take a rucksack with a drink, a map, a mobile and a coat.
- Download a free App to take part in the Great Nature Watch and record your findings on the website.
- Visit a canal museum to find out what games the children of canal boaters played in the past.

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