

*Earth Day is here -
and it's never been
more important*



For those of us who are parents or carers for non-verbal or autistic children, below are some ideas for sensory activities centred on the theme to make the day memorable and to help them learn about the importance of protecting our planet.

Sensory play can be a particularly effective tool for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), as the way they sense the world around them can be a little different. Hypersensitivity and hyposensitivity are common among people with ASD, and these types of sensory activities make discovering new sensations, and learning about topics, fun and comfortable.

For more information on how activities based around the seven senses - sight (vision), hearing (auditory), smell (olfactory), taste (gustatory), touch (tactile), vestibular (movement and balance), and proprioception (position of body) - can benefit children with autism, check out the [article here](#), or keep reading for some great Earth Day sensory play ideas.

1. *Sight: Nature treasure hunt*

So simple - all you need is a basket and the garden or park to explore - and a great way to stimulate the senses (but especially vision) and learn about the nature all around you. You can set a theme for the hunt, or a series of hunts, which could be different colours, shapes, flowers, trees, or even just things that catch your eye. Then it's off exploring and gathering the items. Be sure to lay out the haul and talk about what each item is, inspecting it carefully.

2. *Hearing: Birdsong bingo*

Continuing the theme of the nature around you, play a birdsong bingo game, listening to chirps and warbles in the garden, trying to spot the bird, and trying to identify them using pictures or audio clips from YouTube or a bird-spotting app.



3. *Smell: Fragrance finding game*

From flowers to herbs and leaves to grass and even soil, there are lots of smells to discover right in your back garden or local park! Try to discover as many as possible and talk about how humans have this sense to be able to get information about all the things in nature.

4. *Taste: Herb tasting game*

Growing herbs is a lovely thing to get children involved with - they're generally low-maintenance plants and you can play fun tasting games, exploring the different flavours and trying to describe them or place them into the main taste categories: sweet, sour, bitter, salty and savoury. From mint to pineapple sage and lemon thyme, there are lots of options!



5. *Touch: Wiggly worms and bugs game*

In any garden or park, you can usually find worms, snails, beetles, woodlice and maybe even a ladybird too. Encourage children to hold each creepy-crawly (but none that bite or sting!) and see what it feels like. For anyone who finds this a bit too much out of their comfort zone, there are plenty of other textures in the garden to explore: petals, leaves, grass, soil and bark are just a few of them.

