

Supporting Materials

Nature Connections | Xia Lowery

USE WHAT FITS

Every worksheet is completely optional. These pages may be most useful for families and caregivers to record a loved one's memories, with permission. The older adult can simply talk, look, or listen; there is no expectation to fill anything out. Read prompts aloud or use a whiteboard if helpful.

FIND EVERYTHING ONLINE

[Free Lesson Plans: books, printables, and audio](#)

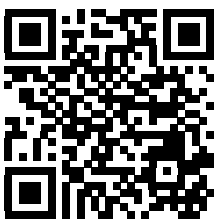
The book's sidebar links open the relevant download. The website audio player supports Lesson 3.

WHAT IS INCLUDED

Scattergories examples; listening guidance; word chains and a word web; optional memory notes; garden scenarios; water explanations; a birding log; appliance comparisons; sorting examples; food journeys; and conversation prompts.

PRINT AND PREPARE

Use US Letter paper, single-sided. Cut only cards and landscape tiles. The landscape download has eight tiles, dotted cut lines, and an assembly guide. Drawings and appliance comparisons are original illustrations, not historical photographs.



Scan to open the free lesson plan page.
No printed worksheets are required to enjoy a conversation.

ACTIVITY 1

Nature Scattergories

Two rounds with different letters. Example answers are included; fill the blanks together.

ROUND ONE

Letter	Animals	Food	Plants	Something found outside
C	Cat		Clover	
D		Date		Dew
F	Fox		Fern	
P		Pear		Path

ROUND TWO

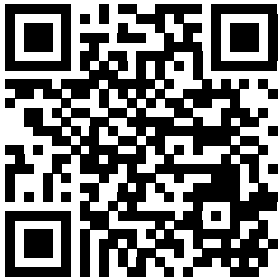
Letter	Animals	Food	Plants	Something found outside
L	Lion		Lily	
T		Tomato		Trail
W	Wolf		Willow	
H		Honey		Hill

Accept creative answers. A food, plant, or outdoor object can spark a story.

ACTIVITY 3

Listen on the Website

Open the free lesson plan page and find Listen to nature.



[Open Listen to nature](https://sustainableseNIorliving.org/lesson-plans)

sustainableseNIorliving.org/lesson-plans

CHOOSE A SOUND

Use a phone, tablet, or computer. Scroll to Listen to nature and press play beside a recording. The audio controls let you pause and replay. Download MP3 is available beneath each player.

AVAILABLE RECORDINGS

American robin, green tree frog, crickets, Canada geese, chickens, ocean, stream, rain, thunder, and dawn chorus. Some clips are brief and can be replayed.

INVITE DISCUSSION

What does it sound like? Is it steady or changing? What place comes to mind? For a simpler choice, ask whether it sounds like water, weather, or an animal.

LEADER NOTE

Preview recordings and use a comfortable volume. Skip thunder or any unwanted sound. These are National Park Service field recordings, identified by the NPS Sound Gallery as public domain; source links appear beside the website players.

Words That Lead to Stories

Use these examples as invitations. Follow the words the participant chooses.

LAKE > FISHING > BOAT > GRANDFATHER

Lake: What did you enjoy doing there? Fishing: What did you take with you? Boat: Who went with you? Grandfather: What was he like on those outings?

GARDEN > TOMATOES > SAUCE > SUNDAY DINNER

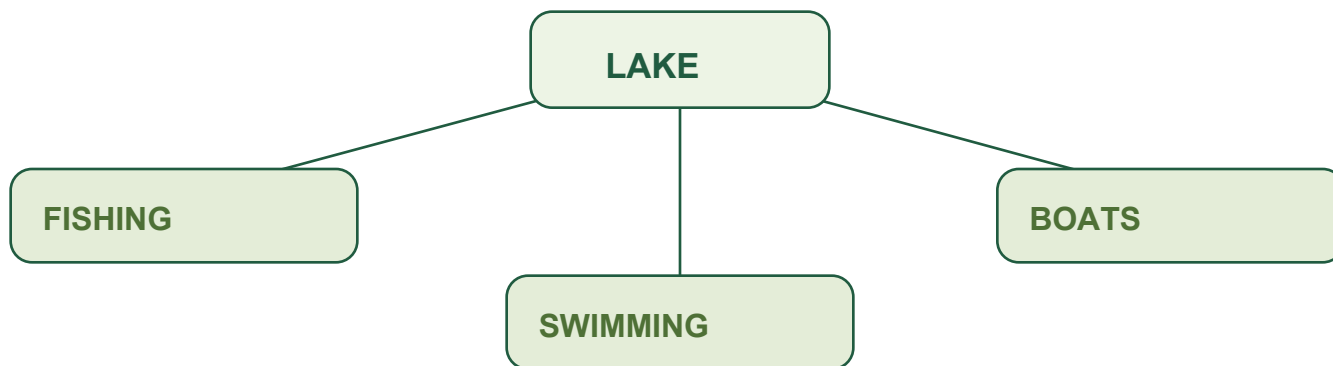
Garden: What grew there? Tomatoes: How did you use them? Sauce: Who made it? Sunday dinner: Who gathered at the table?

SNOW > BOOTS > SCHOOL > FRIENDS

Snow: What did you put on before going out? Boots: Where were you going? School: Who walked with you? Friends: What did you do together?

A SIMPLE WORD WEB

Write LAKE in the center. Add FISHING, SWIMMING, and BOATS around it. Ask: Which would you like to talk about? Add the next word beside that branch. A web can grow in any direction.



Birds From My Chair

Activity 7 | Watch one bird or a favorite perch.

Name (optional): _____ Date: _____

What did the bird look like or do?

Where did it go? What might it have been looking for?

A bird or place this reminds me of:

What I would like to watch next time:

Notice / Investigate

Activities 9-10 | Choose the easy or more challenging invitation.

Name (optional): _____ Date: _____

Easy: One thing I can see or hear on a short route:

Easy: A detail I notice about something I have seen before:

More challenging: A pattern, change, or clue I found:

More challenging: Two possible explanations or a clue to look for next:

Nature by Touch

Activity 11 | Explore materials through touch and conversation.

Name (optional): _____ Date: _____

The texture, shape, weight, or temperature I notice:

A place or material this reminds me of:

How I have used something like this:

Which material I would choose, and why:

What Changed?

Activity 13 | Revisit your plant. Use a new sheet whenever helpful.

Name (optional): _____ Date: _____

Plant and planting date:

Today's date and what has changed:

Care given or something the plant may need:

What I would like to check next time:

Garden Guests: Weed or Welcome?

Leader guide | Read one situation. Ask: Keep it here, want it elsewhere, or find out more?

HOW TO BEGIN

Say: This is an imaginary garden. There is no digging or plant-identification test. I will describe a plant and you can tell me what you would prefer. Ask one question, hear the choices, and follow any garden story that appears.

ROUND 1: A TOMATO AMONG THE FLOWERS

Read: A tomato plant pops up in the flower bed. Would you keep it for tomatoes or want that space for flowers? Leader background: Either choice is reasonable. A weed is a plant growing where someone does not want it. The same tomato can be a welcome surprise to one gardener and unwanted to another.

ROUND 2: GRASS IN THE PATH

Read: Grass is growing between the paving stones. Do you like the green look, or prefer a clear path? Ask: Who kept paths or gardens tidy where you lived? Leader background: A preference can depend on how the space is used. There is no need to agree on one answer.

ROUND 3: AN UNFAMILIAR VINE

Read: A vine you do not recognize is covering other plants beside a stream. Should we find out what it is first? Suggested answer: Yes. Ask a local gardening expert or consult reliable local guidance before moving, planting, or removing it. Fast growth alone does not prove a plant is invasive.

THE DIFFERENCE TO EXPLAIN

An invasive plant is non-native to the area and causes harm there. Some can crowd out native plants and change habitat. Not all non-native plants are invasive, and not all weeds are invasive. Location matters; this activity does not require naming an invasive species.

FINISH WITH A FAVORITE

Ask: Which plant would always be welcome in your garden? Or: Did you ever save a surprise seedling? A participant can simply listen, point to a choice, or share a story. The point is an enjoyable exchange of preferences and experience.

Familiar Scents: Optional Memory Notes

Activity 15 | A family member or caregiver may jot down words with permission.

Name (optional): _____ Date: _____

Scents offered and which felt pleasant or familiar:

Words the person used to describe a scent:

A place, person, or moment they chose to mention:

What they might enjoy smelling or exploring next time:

Where Does the Rain Go?

Leader notes | Trace one possible route. A map or worksheet is optional.

A SIMPLE ROUTE TO SHARE

Rain falls on a roof, runs into a gutter and downspout, and reaches the ground. Some soaks into soil. Some flows downhill over the surface toward a low spot, drain, ditch, stream, or lake. Ask: Where have you seen water collect?

WHAT HAPPENS UNDER THE GROUND?

Water that soaks in can be taken up by roots or move deeper into the ground. Some later reaches springs or streams. Plants use water, and some returns to the air. You can say: A raindrop has more than one possible path.

PAVEMENT OR GARDEN? A SUGGESTED ANSWER

An ordinary planted area usually lets more water soak in than pavement. Pavement sends more water across the surface. Very wet, frozen, or compacted soil may also shed water. Ask which places stayed muddy or dry near the participant's home.

WHAT TRAVELS WITH THE WATER?

Moving water can carry loose soil, leaves, or litter downhill. Plants help slow the flow and hold soil with their roots. Streams connect places upstream and downstream, so what happens on one piece of land can affect another.

WHY WATER MATTERS TO A LANDSCAPE

Water supplies plants and animals, shapes stream channels, and supports places people use and enjoy. Wet areas can hold water temporarily. Ask: Where did people fish, grow food, find shade, or watch wildlife near water?

KEEP LOCAL DETAILS SIMPLE

A storm drain's destination varies by community; do not assume it reaches a treatment plant. If someone asks where local water goes, check a local utility or watershed map together later. For today, one remembered puddle or creek is enough.

Weekly Birding Club Log

One shared record is enough. Watching, listening, and recording are all useful roles.

Team name: _____ Regular meeting place: _____

Date / time	Birds or behaviors noticed	What changed / next visit

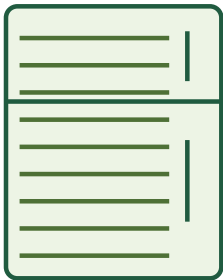
[Download Merlin Bird ID](#)

Meet once a week at a comfortable, familiar spot. Compare what you notice across visits. A leader may keep the shared notes; there is no need for individual forms or a formal event.

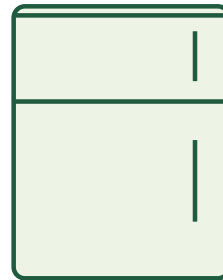
Appliances Then & Now

Original illustrations. These methods can coexist; they are not a universal timeline.

Keeping food cool



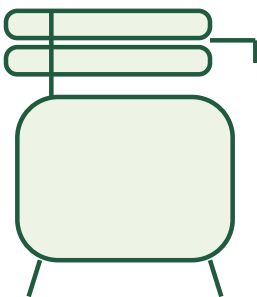
Icebox



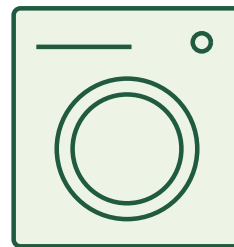
Refrigerator

Who brought the ice or defrosted the freezer? What food had to be used quickly?

Washday



Wringer washer



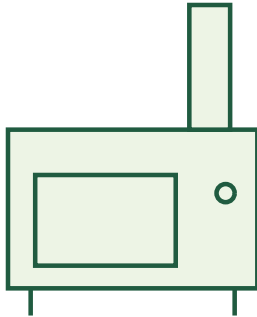
Automatic washer

Who did the laundry? How much lifting, water, and time did it take?

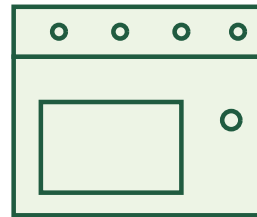
Appliances Then & Now

Original illustrations. These methods can coexist; they are not a universal timeline.

Cooking a meal



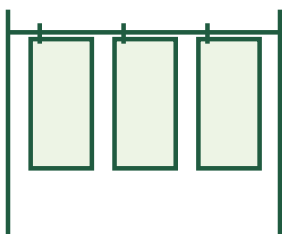
Wood cookstove



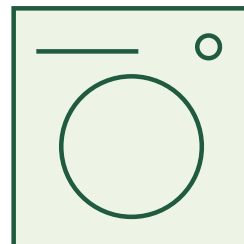
Modern range

How did you judge the heat? What did summer cooking feel like?

Drying clothes



Clothesline



Clothes dryer

What happened when it rained? Which method do you still prefer?

Small Actions, Big Impact

Use these bullet points on paper or a whiteboard. No cards are needed.

- Turn off unused lights; use less water.
- Repair clothing, tools, or household objects.
- Use leftovers and reduce food waste.
- Reuse bags or containers; follow local recycling rules.
- Grow herbs or native flowers; help with a shared garden.
- Join a cleanup, share a repair skill, or encourage a community project.

EXAMPLE SORTING MAT

Things I Already Do	Things I Used to Do	Things I Could Try
Mend clothing Use leftovers	Grow vegetables Hang laundry outside	Care for a herb pot Share a repair skill

Ask the person where each action belongs. The example is not a judgment of what anyone should do. A choice can fit more than one column.

Our Action Sorting Mat

Write, point, or dictate. A whiteboard with these three columns works too.

Things I Already Do	Things I Used to Do	Things I Could Try

From Garden to Sunday Dinner

Six food journeys | Cut on dotted borders if you would like separate cards.



Apple

Orchard > harvest > packing > transport > shop or kitchen

What would you make with this? Did you grow, buy, or preserve it?



Bread

Wheat field > harvest > mill > flour > bakery or kitchen

What would you make with this? Did you grow, buy, or preserve it?



Milk

Cow > milking > cooling > processing > bottling > shop or delivery

What would you make with this? Did you grow, buy, or preserve it?



Egg

Hen > egg collection > packing > shop, market, or kitchen

What would you make with this? Did you grow, buy, or preserve it?



Corn

Seed > field > harvest > market or processing > meal

What would you make with this? Did you grow, buy, or preserve it?



Tomato

Seed > garden or farm > harvest > kitchen, market, or processing

What would you make with this? Did you grow, buy, or preserve it?

My Favorite Outdoor Place

Activity 21 | Sketch, write, or dictate.

Name (optional): _____ Date: _____

The place I loved:

Who was there and what we did:

What I could see, hear, or smell:

What I would show a visitor first:

Seasons of My Life

Activity 22 | Adapt to the participant's climate and traditions. Cut on dotted borders.

Spring What was the first sign of spring? Did you plant, fish, or notice returning birds? What did spring smell like?	Summer What did you do on a hot day? Who shared your summers? What foods or storms do you remember?
Fall Did you harvest, visit a fair, or preserve food? What did leaves look like? What meal meant autumn to you?	Winter How did you stay warm? What did snow or rainy days mean? What traditions or foods do you remember?

Nature Through the Decades

Activity 24 | These U.S. examples invite stories, not a test of dates. Cut on dotted borders.



1950s: Evenings at home

What did your family do in the evening?

Decade connection: Television spread through U.S. homes in the 1950s, changing evening routines. Compare screen time with porch visits and outdoor play.

Leader background: Outdoor time, radio, and visiting continued alongside television. Invite memories without suggesting that every family lived the same way.

Did you sit outside or visit neighbors?



1960s: Gardens and insects

How did you keep insects out of the garden?

Decade connection: Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* in 1962, bringing pesticide use and its effects on wildlife into wider public discussion.

Leader background: Some pesticides can harm helpful insects and wildlife or enter water. Risk depends on the product and how it is used.

What grew well? Did your methods change?



1970s: Caring for our neighborhood

Who helped keep your neighborhood clean?

Decade connection: The first Earth Day, in 1970, brought people together around environmental concerns. Neighborhood cleanups fit this growing public involvement. Leader background: Removing litter helps keep waste out of waterways and wildlife habitat. Preventing litter helps the improvement last.

Were there cleanups or bottle collections?



1980s: What we saved

What did your household save or reuse?

Decade connection: In the 1980s, communities added recycling programs as landfill space became a concern. More households began sorting waste. Leader background: Recycling can save energy and raw materials. Reusing jars and other useful items also reduces waste.

Did you save jars or return bottles?

Nature Through the Decades

Activity 24 | These U.S. examples invite stories, not a test of dates. Cut on dotted borders.

 1990s: Getting around How did you travel to work, shops, or visits? Decade connection: The 1990 Clean Air Act amendments led to tighter vehicle pollution standards. Travel memories connect to these cleaner-air efforts. Leader background: Walking, cycling, and shared trips can reduce fuel use. Distance, mobility, and available transport affect which options work for each person. Who traveled with you? What route do you recall?	 2000s: Changes on the road What cars or journeys do you remember? Decade connection: The Toyota Prius reached the worldwide market in 2000. This decade connects to the arrival of hybrid cars. Leader background: Hybrids combine an engine and electric motor. They can use less fuel than comparable gasoline-only cars, reducing carbon dioxide emissions. What made a trip memorable?
 Recent years: Power at home What changes have you seen in home energy? Decade connection: U.S. solar power expanded from the 2010s onward, making panels a more familiar sight. Leader background: Panels generate electricity without burning fuel. Making them uses materials and energy; output depends on sunlight. Have you seen panels nearby?	 Across the years What change would you keep? What do you miss? Decade connection: Compare several decades. Changes reached different households at different times. Leader background: Cost, location, and preference shape experience. Welcome stories without asking for exact dates. What would you show a younger person?

People Making a Difference

Read one example, then let the conversation grow. No cards or prior knowledge are needed.

NEIGHBORS CARE FOR WATER

Neighbors gather litter from a stream bank and ask where it comes from. A local group might also report a leaking pipe or encourage bins near a busy picnic spot. Ask: What would help keep the place clean after the cleanup? Who cared for water where you lived?

A COMMUNITY CREATES SHADE

Residents, students, and park staff can work together to plant trees and care for them while they grow. Someone who cannot dig can help choose a useful shady spot or remember which trees grew well. Ask: Where would you most appreciate shade?

PEOPLE REPAIR AND SHARE

A neighbor fixes a chair, a family passes on outgrown clothes, or a group shares gardening tools. These ordinary actions keep useful things in use. Ask: Who could fix almost anything? What skill would you enjoy passing along?

RESIDENTS SPEAK UP

People may write to local leaders, attend a meeting, or gather stories about a polluted stream or a park that needs care. Sharing firsthand knowledge can help explain a problem. Ask: What would you want the people making decisions to understand?

EVERYDAY EXAMPLES COUNT

A shop reduces unnecessary packaging; neighbors care for a shared garden; walkers leave a trail free of litter. Choose one and ask: Would this make life better here? What would make it easier to join in?

Our Changing Shores & Farms

Leader guide | Begin with a real place, then ask one concrete question.

CHOOSE A PLACE PARTICIPANTS KNOW

Name a nearby lake, river, farm, orchard, or road past a field. A personal photograph or simple map can help. Say: Let us think about this place together. You do not need to know its full history.

AT THE WATER: WHAT WAS AT THE EDGE?

Ask: Did you see reeds, trees, stones, sand, or a dock? Where did people fish, swim, or sit? Then ask: What is there now? A lawn or dock gives people access; shoreline plants help hold soil and provide shelter for wildlife. Ask where there might be room for both a path to the water and some plants.

A LOCAL SHORELINE EXAMPLE

Try: Think of the lake beside the picnic park. Did the bank have long grass when you first visited? Where did you enter the water? If the bank is bare now, what would you keep for access, and where could plants grow? Do not assume every change caused damage; ask what the person saw.

ON THE FARM: WHAT GREW THERE?

Ask: Were there cows, corn, hay, vegetables, or fruit trees? Who worked there? What is different now: crops, machinery, field size, buildings, or houses? Farms provide food and livelihoods. Keeping soil covered and planted strips beside streams can help hold soil and reduce runoff.

A LOCAL FARM EXAMPLE

Try: Think of the fields along the road to town. Were there fences or a creek? What jobs did people do in each season? If houses stand there now, ask what the new neighbors gained and what people miss. If it is still farmed, ask which farming practice or skill they admire.

CLOSE WITH A CLEAR CHOICE

Ask: What is one feature you would keep at this place? A fishing path, shoreline plants, a farm field, an old tree, or something else? People can value different things. Write down the place name and their choice only if they want a record.

Storms, Snow Days & Starting Again

Activity 29 | Optional notes; let the participant choose a comfortable memory.

Name (optional): _____ Date: _____

A snow day, storm, or other weather event I remember:

What changed at home, on a road, farm, or nearby natural place?

Who helped? What did people do together?

What recovered, what needed repair, or what helped us carry on?

What Will We Leave Behind?

Activity 30 | A message in the participant's own words.

Name (optional): _____ Date: _____

I hope you will still be able to...

It matters to me because...

One way to care for it is...

I would like to keep this private / share it with...

Background & resource links

Research on aging and dementia is cited in the activity book.

[Invasive plants: National Park Service](#)

[Water and landscapes: EPA](#)

[Audio: National Park Service Sound Gallery](#)

[Merlin Bird ID: Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#)

[Earth Day and Rachel Carson context: EPA history](#)

[Pesticides and pollinators: EPA](#)

[Why recycling matters: EPA](#)

[Hybrid vehicles: U.S. Department of Energy](#)

[Solar basics: U.S. Department of Energy](#)

[1950s television: Smithsonian](#)

[Recycling history: EPA](#)

[1990s vehicle standards: EPA](#)

[Hybrid car history: Department of Energy](#)

[Solar growth: Energy Information Administration](#)