Green Christmas  
Key Stages 1 and 2  
1 hour 45 mins

Explore the Garden to find plants that are traditionally used at Christmas, including British native plants and exotic spices from the tropics. Look out for leaves, seeds and seedpods, which you will turn into beautiful natural decorations. Make some to hang on our Botanic Garden Christmas tree, and some to take back to school. Discuss other ways to be "green" at Christmas including reducing waste, helping wildlife and having a “green” tree at school. This session is part guided and part self-guided tour.

Learning outcomes

During this session pupils will:
• Discuss the difference between evergreen and deciduous trees
• Find and identify traditional Christmas plants
• Discover the importance of the rainforest in providing some of our favourite Christmas spices
• Identify which parts of the plant our various Christmas spices come from
• Make a Christmas decoration to take home with them
• Discuss how they can make their Christmas greener by reducing waste, recycling and making gifts

National Curriculum subject areas

Science Year 1: plants – identify deciduous and evergreen plants, structure of plants  
Science Year 1: seasonal changes  
Science Year 2: living things in their habitats – identify plants in their habitats  
Science Year 3: plants – identify different parts of plants  
Art and design Key Stage 1: use a range of materials  
Art and design Key Stage 2: develop use of materials

Pre-visit activities

Classroom discussion
• What is a Botanic Garden? What kind of plants and trees grow here? Where did they come from originally?
• How many different types of plant and tree do you think we grow? The answer is approximately 5,000! Take a look at our website to find out more:  
http://www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk
**Essential Christmas**

- Ask pupils to make a list of all the things that they associate with Christmas, such as Christmas cards, Christmas trees, Christmas lunch etc. How many of these are made out of or rely on plants? Could pupils imagine a Christmas without plants?

**Post-visit activities**

*Green up a Christmas tree*

- Make natural decorations for the Christmas tree at school from different plant parts: leaves, roots, flowers, seeds, stems and fruits.

*Green Christmas*

- Christmas can notoriously be a time of waste as well as enjoyment. Can pupils come up with their own “green pledge” to make their Christmas a bit more eco-friendly? Share their ideas in an assembly with the rest of the school.

*Make it a Fairtrade Christmas*

- Many of our Christmas ingredients come from tropical climes. It’s important to support the farmers that grow this produce, so keep an eye out for the Fairtrade logo on sugar, chocolate and other products on the supermarket shelves. You can find out more about Fairtrade and the Fairtrade Foundation here: [http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/)

*Protect the rainforest*

- A scheme designed to protect the rainforest is the Rainforest Alliance Certified Seal, which assures consumers that the product they are purchasing has been grown and harvested using environmentally and socially responsible practices: [http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/marketing/marks/certified](http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/marketing/marks/certified)

**Resources**

- A climate change plea delivered by the one and only Father Christmas! Hear about the changes he is making to be more eco-friendly! [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/8426269.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/8426269.stm)
- The Friends of the Earth website has plenty of tips for how to be more environmentally friendly, and here are some seasonal ideas to try: [http://www.foe.co.uk/living/articles/25-eco-friendly-christmas-tips](http://www.foe.co.uk/living/articles/25-eco-friendly-christmas-tips)
- Here’s another website with more ideas for a sustainable Christmas: [http://www.sustainablebabysteps.com/green-christmas.html](http://www.sustainablebabysteps.com/green-christmas.html)

If you have any comments or feedback on these activities, or need any further information, please contact Vicki Yates or Ruth Jordan, Education Officers education@obg.ox.ac.uk.