



IN SEARCH OF WINTER SNACKS

Animals need to eat, even when it's cold outside. Time to think like a hungry animal and see what winter has to offer!

Do it yourself!

Time: 10-30 Minutes

Materials: None, but a spoon or magnifying glass are optional

This activity builds dexterity and promotes a positive relationship with nature!



What to do:

1. Go on a walk together outdoors. Find some plants, soil, leaves on the ground or anything else natural. You can find a few of these things wherever you are!
2. Talk about what different animals might like to eat. Do you see any of those items around where you are?
3. Pick a spot to stop and take a closer look. You can look at a plant, the ground, or anything else that catches your eye! Would an animal eat any of the things you see?
4. If you brought a spoon or magnifying glass, you can use them to examine your finds. If you pick anything up with your hands or spoon, be sure to put it back so animals can still use it!



Photo Courtesy: Taryn Elliot, Pexels

Play for all ages!

For ages Birth-2, pick a spot with a few different items, like stones, leaves, and mud. Which ones might you eat (if you hadn't found them outside on the ground)? Which of them might an animal eat? Are the items you and an animal might eat the same or different?

For ages 3-8, make a recipe from the items you find. What animals might enjoy eating your creation? Have you ever seen these animals in your neighborhood?

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Adult Guide

Take action! Did you spot any birds while you were playing? Birds are great at finding food during the winter and can often be seen hard at work. If your child enjoys spotting birds, you can join the Great Backyard Bird Count at birdcount.org. This bird count usually happens in February.

What is my child learning?

Young children are learning about their world at incredible speed! The [Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines](#) (**Bolded** below) help us see what they're learning and how the adults in their lives can maximize their potential.

Spending time outside in cold weather helps your child understand the needs of animals!



When you get outside with your child, they are **building relationships**, not only between your family members, but with nature and animals around them. As they **learn about the world**, they build empathy by taking the perspective of other living things. Your child increases their sense of connection to their body and their surroundings by **touching, seeing, hearing, and moving around**. Manipulating small objects develops their finger strength and dexterity, which are important pre-writing skills, and their core muscles get a workout when they move around to observe objects at different heights.

Teaching standards met by this activity:

Next Generation Science Standards

[K-LS1.C Organization for matter and energy flow in organisms:](#) *All animals need food in order to live and grow. They obtain their food from plants or from other animals. Plants need water and light to live and grow.*

To connect to this standard, extend your discussions:

- Are there any animals who do not need food, or do they all need to eat something to live and grow? Do different animals need different foods?
- Are there any items you find in nature that no animal can use as food?
- Were there any places outdoors where you found no living plants? Why might that be?