



Lesson title	Healing body and soul
Learning objective	Pupils look at plants that have medicinal properties, and explore garden environments as places for meditation and inner reflection. [Note: depending on the time available, teachers may wish to split this lesson into two parts, especially if a trip to a local botanic garden can be organised.]
Pupils will:	Learn that many plants have medicinal properties. Begin to understand the benefits to health and creativity of meditating or thinking in a garden.
Key words	Healing, therapeutic, meditation

Plan	Resources
<p>Introduction Ask pupils: have they ever used food or drink made from a plant to help them feel better? For example, a drink made from root ginger, lemon and honey when they had a sore throat or cold? Have they ever seen one of their parents or a relative take an aspirin? Show them pictures of willow tree and meadowsweet, both of which contain a major ingredient in aspirin, and which have been known for thousands of years to have healing properties (Resource 1).</p> <p>Explain that in the main activity in the first part of this lesson they are going to be focusing on these and other plants that have been discovered to have medicinal properties.</p>	<p>Resource 1: Pictures of willow tree bark and meadowsweet and information about salicylic acid.</p>
<p>Activity 1 Explain to the class that humanists believe it is very important to serve humanity and for this reason it is crucial to conserve eco-systems that might contain plants with therapeutic potential. Humanists value the discovery of plants that may contain chemicals for use in medicines. However they also feel it is important to test scientifically the validity and safety of traditional remedies. Some remedies might make us feel better only because we think they will make us well. Scientific testing can help us find out if there is any truth to these claims, and although several traditional herbal remedies have been found to be effective medicines, others have not. Explain that humanists believe it is important to</p>	<p>Resource 2: Information sheets on the medicinal properties of several plants. Coloured pens, poster paper, scissors, glue-stick.</p> <p>Resource 3: Outline of a human body</p>



Plan	Resources
<p>develop our ability to think critically and rationally so that we can learn what is healthy for us and what is not.</p> <p>Divide the class into groups. Give each group a set of information sheets (Resource 2) and an outline of a human body (Resource 3). Ask the pupils to discuss the information sheets and to mark on the outline which part/s of the body the plants heal. Discuss the groups' findings. Do the components of some plants heal more than one ailment?</p> <p>Ask the groups to select one plant and to produce a poster about this plant, in particular explaining why it is important.</p>	
<p>Activity 2 <i>(Can be used as the assessment activity in conjunction with the plenary discussion)</i></p> <p>Discuss: Considering that so many different plants have been shown to have some kind of healing property, do you think there might be plants out there with yet-to-be-discovered medicinal potential? If so, what are the implications for conservation?</p> <p>If there is time and a group has finished their poster (<i>in activity 1</i>), ask them to look at the information about <i>Cinchona officinalis</i>. Explain to them that there are many different types of Cinchona trees and that these also contain quinine. In Podocarpus National Park in Ecuador, there is one remaining group of <i>Cinchona mutisii</i> trees. They are recognised as endangered but there is mining and deforestation taking place in the National Park. Ask pupils to compose a letter to the Ecuadorian ambassador in the UK about why it is important to protect <i>Cinchona mutisii</i> to ensure its survival. Their reasons should include reference to the therapeutic potentials of the plant. Alternatively they could write a letter protesting about the destruction of a habitat that may contain plants with as yet undiscovered therapeutic potentials.</p> <p>At the end of these activities encourage the groups to share their posters and letters with the rest of the class.</p>	



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<p>Activity 3 Point out that the lesson so far has been about how plants can heal the body, but that now we are going to look at ways that plants – or more specifically natural spaces and gardens – can be places to meditate and think, i.e. that they can be refreshing to the mind and healing to the soul.</p> <p>Ask the class if there is any place outside – e.g. in their garden, a local wood or park – where they go to sit alone and think. Have any of them climbed a tree to be alone? Also ask if any member of the class ever had to recover from an illness or a broken bone and whether they found it peaceful and healing to sit out in the garden.</p> <p>Tell the class about Charles Darwin, the famous British scientist (Resource 3). In particular how, in his later years when he suffered from ill health, he was encouraged by his doctor to take exercise in the gardens of his house. As well as helping Darwin recover from his illness, these walks actually helped him to think and to come up with new ideas. People still visit Darwin’s home, Down House, to walk along his ‘thinking path’.</p> <p>Ask: when you go out for a walk, do do you get any ideas or come up with solutions to problems that have been bothering you?</p>	<p>Resource 4: Background information on the story of Charles Darwin and the ‘thinking path’.</p>
<p>Activity 4 Take the class outside to the school garden or nearby park. Explain that they are going to focus on different sensory impressions in a garden: sight, sound, smell, temperature, touch.</p> <p>Provide pupils with pencils, paper and clipboard and get them to sit by themselves in silence and record their impressions. Ask them what feelings this form of meditation provokes?</p> <p>Ask the pupils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What were some of the unexpected sensations (sight, sound etc) you experienced during your garden meditation? 	<p>Pencils, paper and clipboards</p>



Plan

Resources

- What do you think people might miss by rushing around everywhere?
- What place do you go to – or imagine – when you need to feel calm and peaceful?
- Why might sitting quietly – or working – in a garden be healing?

Plenary

Show the pupils two pictures (**Resource 5**). Discuss the pictures with the class, prompting them with the following questions:

- Tell me about these pictures
- Can you name a plant that is used in medicine?
- How do you think these pictures might be linked?
- Can you explain why it is important to protect plants and their habitats?

Pupils may be able to:

1. Talk about a plant that has medicinal properties.
2. Give reasons why it is important that this plant is protected.
3. Discuss the therapeutic and spiritual benefits of sitting quietly in a garden
4. Discuss the future implications of destroying a habitat containing plants with unknown medical potential.
5. Give reasons why the plant world can be said to be capable of healing both body and soul.

Resource 5: Two pictures – one of a rainforest with a bottle of medicine in the corner and one with someone outside