

A Guide To... MUD kitchens



With many thanks to Lisa Nelson at St Edwards
Primary School for creating this guide.



Setting up a Mud Kitchen

Before setting up your mud kitchen, take a bit of time to consider the following:

Location - Decide where your Mud Kitchen will be located. Consider whether you want it sheltered or out in the open. Don't place it too close to drains or they'll soon become blocked!

Flooring - Mud and water can become very slippery! If you don't have a grass surface, consider using bark, rubber mats etc. as flooring.

Enclosing the area - In order to keep the mud (and mess!) contained in one area, you may want to enclose the mud kitchen, this can easily be achieved by using your furniture or wooden planters.



Make sure children have access to handwashing facilities for after play.

What you will need:

Furniture - This can be purpose-built furniture or alternately, you may want to use old tables, palettes and tuff trays or Creative Crates with Tops. Just make sure it is the right height for the children and stable enough to use outside.

Water - Water is a necessity for messy, mud kitchen play. Some settings choose to use a water butt to collect rainwater, however, these need to be managed carefully as bacteria can build up in them so will need risk assessing first. Using a hose pipe to fill containers each morning works well for us at St Edward's and encourages the children to use the water wisely in their play.

Storage - You may want to add some shelves, boxes or crates to store resources in, so that they are tidy and can be self selected by the children.



What you will need:

Utensils - Include resources such as pans, metal bowls, wooden spoons, whisks, baking trays, cake tins, and ladles. Consider having different sized utensils for lots of opportunities to apply mathematical language.



Natural materials - This will vary throughout the year depending on the seasons. Ones we have used include; conkers, pinecones, cut grass, pebbles, herbs, flowers, pumpkins, twigs, leaves.



Mud - The most important thing - MUD! Topsoil works best (look for ones that are certified clean). Avoid compost due to the risk of bacteria.

Some children may have allergies to plants / flowers.



Collect berries in the summer and freeze them to use later.



TTS resources we recommend...

Mud Kitchen Accessory Set - EY07958

This is an excellent set that includes all the essentials for scooping, mixing, measuring, and grinding.

The pestle and mortars provide valuable opportunities for developing fine motor skills, and hand strength,. Watching materials break down during grinding often leads to rich discussion and exploration.

The selection of differently sized bowls is highly versatile, supporting comparisons of capacity as well as offering plenty of opportunities for mixing and experimentation.



Creative Cans and Tubs - EY06673

Metal Jugs - EY06674

Jugs and a variety of containers are essential for mixing activities, and these two sets are ideal for that purpose.

The jugs hold a generous amount of water while remaining light enough for young children to lift and pour confidently, supporting the development of physical motor skills. We often use them to hold different coloured liquids, creating valuable opportunities for colour mixing. Their varying heights and sizes also naturally promote early mathematical thinking.

The metal cans and tins are perfectly sized for children to handle, and the sturdy handles make them easy to pour from. They are wonderfully versatile—equally useful for storing materials or for children to use in their own mixing and creative play.



Nesting Metal Colander Collection - EY07704

Assorted Messy Play Scoops - EY06744

The scoops have been a highly valued resource in our mud kitchen. They are robust, easy for children to grasp, and available in different sizes so encourage children to consider what they are collecting and how much each scoop will hold.

The colanders have also proved to be a valuable resource for supporting children's exploration of cause and effect. Children enjoy creating mud pies using a variety of natural materials, before observing how these separate when poured through a colander. This has led to rich opportunities for the children to explain and discuss their observations. The range of sizes also pairs well with the nesting bowls, further encouraging children to match, compare, and explore size relationships.



Giant Potion Bottles - EY07350

Messy Maths Measuring Bottles - EY10361

These resources are consistently popular with the children and offer a wide range of opportunities for imaginative play, including creating potions, spells, and character-themed drinks.

The variety of bottle sizes supports early mathematical thinking by encouraging children to explore measuring and comparing capacity.

Each bottle is designed to be easy for young children to hold and pour from with control. The coloured lids also promote matching skills—and even spark a bit of collaborative problem-solving when one inevitably goes missing!



Magical Ingredient Storage Jars - EY07411

These containers pair well with the Potion Bottles and Messy Maths Measuring Bottles, providing even more opportunities for imaginative play. They are particularly effective for themed setups when you want to spark fresh interest in the mud kitchen area.

Their large capacity makes them ideal for storing natural resources that children can freely access and use in their play.

The clear, glass-like appearance has been especially popular during potion and perfume-making activities, allowing children to clearly observe colour changes, mixing, and whether added materials float or sink. This visibility naturally encourages scientific-style discussions and exploratory thinking.



Learning in the Mud Kitchen

The learning opportunities are **ENDLESS!**

Mud Kitchens offer open ended play opportunities and provide lots of possibilities to develop communication and language, use of new vocabulary, collaborative work, imaginative play and turn taking.

They are a great way of meeting the needs of children who are sensory seeking and crave different textures.



There are countless opportunities to apply mathematical language and develop mathematical concepts such as measuring, comparing mass, counting, sharing.

Some
Examples of
our
Autumn
Term
Set Ups...



Flower Perfume

This is always a popular activity and can be set up at any time of year, with minimal preparation. Using different seasonal flowers will help change it up and encourage different conversations and observations.

You will need:

Flowers or plants, coloured water, pots to mix in and pour from, sieves, spoons and stirrers, and potion bottles for the perfume.

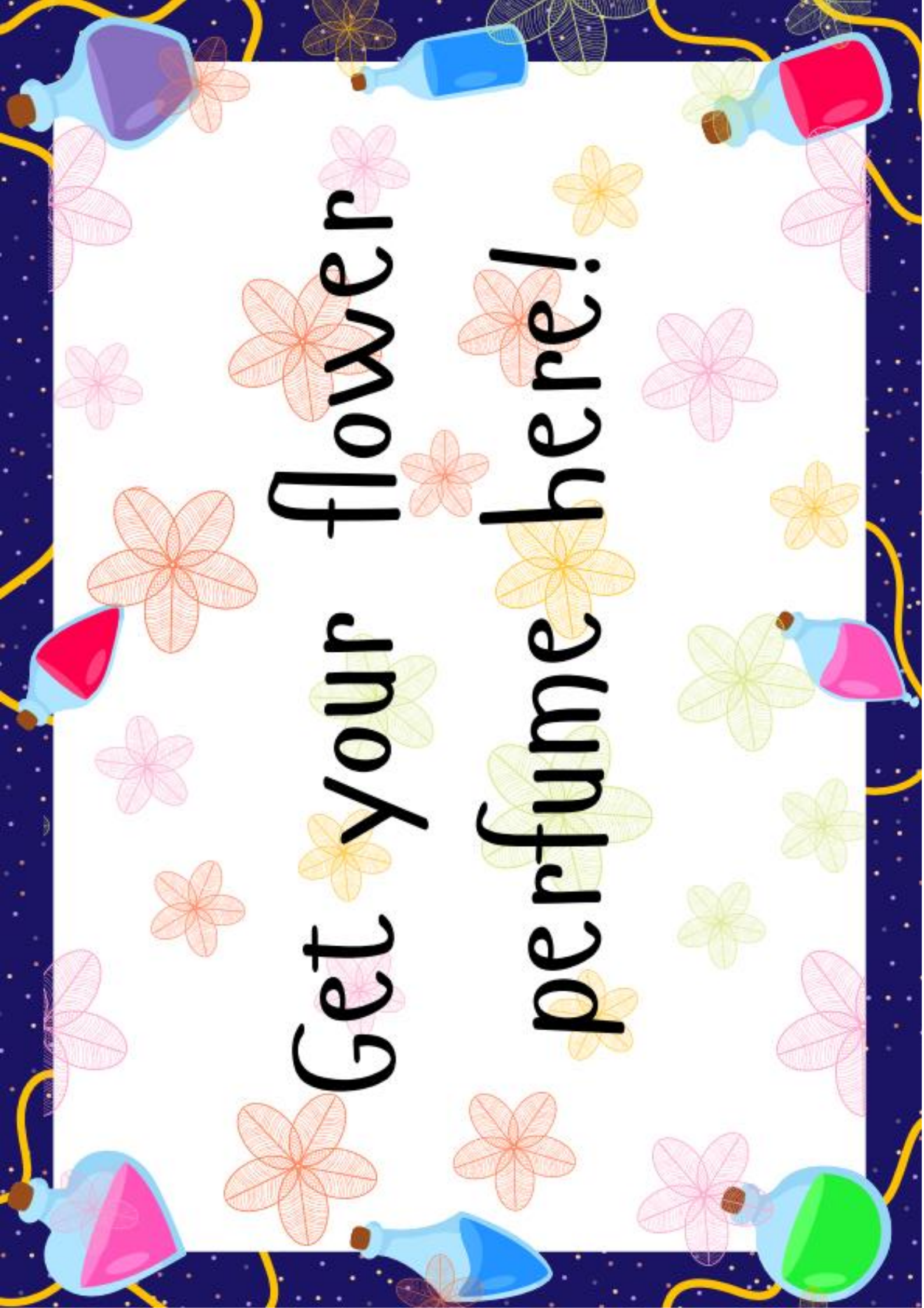




Add cornflour
to your
coloured water
to make the
colour more
vivid.



Get your flower
perfume here!



Witches Potion

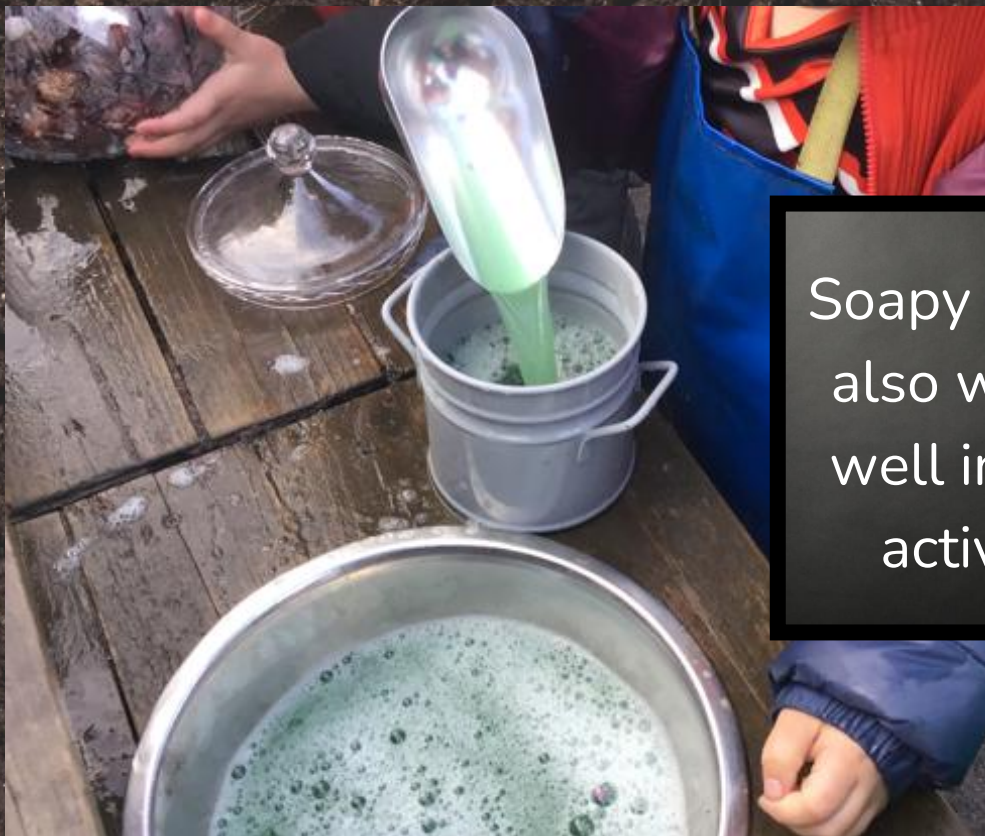
Theme: Autumn / Halloween

Another popular activity that involves lots of mixing, stirring,, observation and imagination!

You will need:

Potion bottles, coloured water (you could add biodegradable glitter), storage jars for your ingredients, mixing bowls and stirrers.





Soapy water
also works
well in this
activity

HELPFUL
TIPS

Secret
WITCH'S BREW

Ingredients

2 scoops of pumpkin flesh



5 pumpkin seeds



3 Autumn leaves



3 conkers



4 scoops of green soapy
water



Pumpkin Soup

Theme: Autumn, Harvest

The mud kitchen is a great place for messy, pumpkin exploration and can initiate lots of imaginative play. Adding a pestle and mortar encourages discussion based around cause and effect.

You will need:

Pumpkins/squash, scoops, spoons, bowls and pots to store the flesh, and pestle and mortars.





Bonfire Cafe

Theme: Bonfire Night

The children really enjoyed this one, it was simple to set up using some natural resources. We saw lots of cooperative play and children role playing their own experiences of being in a cafe.

You will need:

Tubs or ingredient jars to store your natural resources (leaves, conkers), spoons, scoops, pestle and mortar, jugs, cups and lots of water!







BONFIRE

cafe

Muddy Mocha

Conker Cappuccino

Leaf Latte

Twig Tea

Berry Blitz



NASA

Theme: Sp

Any chance to m



Bowls, scoops, coloured water, natural resources,
potion bottles, and spoons.





Add simple labels to potion bottles to enhance play.



Reindeer Food

Theme: Christmas

In the run up to Christmas, we made reindeer food and what better place to do this than in the mud kitchen...keeping the mess outdoors and working in the fresh air!

You will need:

Scoops, tubs and jars to store your ingredients, pestle and mortars, scoops, wooden spoons, bowls to mix in, and little bags to put their reindeer food in to take home.







Reindeers like...



1 Scoop of Oats

1 Scoop of cereal



3 Cranberries

Chopped Carrrots



Notes to remember:

Even though you may have carefully planned a set up, the children may take it in a different direction. This provides perfect opportunities for you to follow their lead and support their learning.

Your beautiful set up may appear 'destroyed' within minutes. This is normal, the children will still enjoy it - sometimes more!

Most importantly, have fun!



With many thanks to Lisa Nelson at St Edwards Primary School for creating this guide.

