

**Making a scarecrow for the garden can help develop children's knowledge and understanding of nature, and especially growing and birds. As well as increasing their vocabulary it is a fun creative activity for all ages!**



**Knowledge and understanding of the world (KUW)**

# Super scarecrows

## Essential resources

- Pillowcase for head
- Strong elastic bands or string
- Two pieces of wood (one long, one short)
- Straw, hay, or leaves for stuffing
- Clothes and hat
- Needle and thread
- Permanent markers

Gardeners and farmers around the world have been making scarecrows for hundreds of years. Scarecrows were first made to do just what the name says, scare crows (and other birds) away from fields.

Scarecrows have become popular characters in children's fiction, as well as featuring in the film *The Wizard of Oz*. Scarecrows are so popular that many villages have annual 'scarecrow festivals', where locals are encouraged to make unusual looking scarecrows and display them outside their houses or in the front garden.

Spring and summer are the ideal times for making a scarecrow, as you may have just sown some seeds with the children, or simply want to stop pigeons from pecking away at your lettuces or cabbages! Farmers and gardeners realise that they have to take other steps to properly keep the birds away, so this activity is really a bit of fun for you and the children, and an opportunity to chat and encourage

them to take an interest in birds and what is growing in the garden.

However, if you are really serious about keeping birds away, then your scarecrow will need to have lots of flapping material, or you will need to add shiny and noisy objects, such as a necklace made out of small foil pie dishes, or even earrings out of old CDs!

We tend to think of scarecrows as being big and male, but if you follow the children's ideas, you will find that you end up with men, women and probably scarecrow children as well!

## Making a scarecrow

Nearly any long-sleeved shirt will work; however, overalls work best for the bottoms. You can create a miniature scarecrow using some of the children's old clothing. A small pillowcase or large piece of fabric should be used for the head, which can be stuffed with straw hay or dry leaves (or a mixture of all three).

Fasten the sticks together into a T-shape, with string. Slide the shirt onto the top of the support (with arms spread out) and tie off the bottom and wrists with string or elastic bands. Stuff the shirt. If you like, the children can help you sew up the bottom of the shirt, and this way you can make the scarecrow as fat as you like.

Tie the bottoms of the overalls and then fill the legs. Place the support into the overalls, and use a belt or twine around the waist. Place the head on top of the support and tie it on as well. To make the face, you can use waterproof permanent markers, or sew on features using buttons or material shapes.



## EYFS links

Scarecrow related activities help children to:

- Show an interest in why things happen (Exploration and Investigation, 22-36 months).
- Show curiosity and interest in the features of objects and living things (Exploration and Investigation, 30-50 months).
- Show curiosity about why things happen and how things work (Exploration and Investigation, 30-50 months).
- Show understanding of cause/effect relations (Exploration and Investigation, 30-50 months).
- Find out about, and identify, some features of living things, objects and events they observe (Exploration and Investigation, ELG).
- Ask questions about why things happen and how things work (Exploration and Investigation, ELG).
- Construct with a purpose in mind, using a variety of resources (Designing and Making, 40-60+ months).
- Love to be outdoors and closely observe what animals and people do (Place, 8-20 months).
- Be curious about the environment (Place, 16-26 months).
- Comment and ask questions about the natural world (Place, 30-50 months).
- Observe, find out about and identify features in the natural world (Place, ELG).

## Cross-curricular

- **CLL:** Use talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events (Language for Thinking, 16-26 months).
- **CD:** Express and communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings by using a widening range of materials (Being Creative – Responding to Experiences, Expressing and Communicating Ideas, ELG).
- **CD:** Work creatively on a large or small scale (Exploring Media and Materials, 40-60+ months).
- **CD:** Explore colour, texture, shape, form and space in three dimensions (Exploring Media and Materials, ELG).

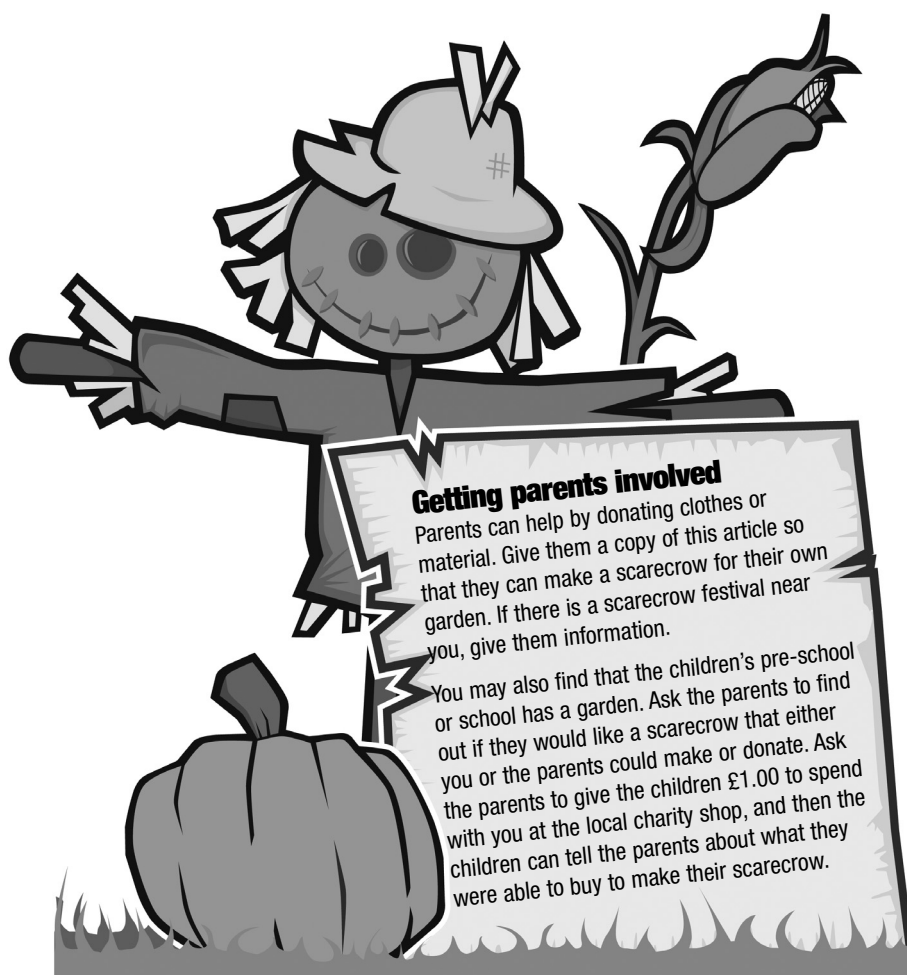
Tear out and file these pages so you can use them again and again

## 0-3-years-old

Very young children will enjoy talking about the clothes and stuffing the straw/leaves/hay into the scarecrow. They might be a bit frightened by a big scarecrow, so have a go at making a small one first. They will probably like to play with the scarecrow, so it might be an idea to make it without the sticks to support it so they can move it about easily.

## 3-5-years-old

Children in this age group will begin to understand about birds eating seeds and keeping them away. Sing *Dingle Dangle Scarecrow* to introduce the idea of farms, farmers and fields full of crops, as well as learning about all the animals in the farm. You can make small scarecrows to go in large flowerpots, or to take home, using kebab sticks or thin doweling as supports.



### Getting parents involved

Parents can help by donating clothes or material. Give them a copy of this article so that they can make a scarecrow for their own garden. If there is a scarecrow festival near you, give them information.

You may also find that the children's pre-school or school has a garden. Ask the parents to find out if they would like a scarecrow that either you or the parents could make or donate. Ask the parents to give the children £1.00 to spend with you at the local charity shop, and then the children can tell the parents about what they were able to buy to make their scarecrow.

## Extending activities for 5-8-year-olds

Give your scarecrow a name, and have a go at making up a story about him. Neil Griffiths has a story called, *The Scarecrow That Didn't Scare*, and *The Little Scarecrow Boy* by Margaret Brown and *Tattybogle* by Sandra Ann Horn and Ken Brown are also likely to spark their imaginations.

We want to encourage birds into the garden, but we don't want them to eat our precious food! Make food that birds will like, in the hope

that they will leave our plants alone. Find out about different birds and what they like to eat.

The RSPB has excellent ideas on its website [www.rspb.org/youth/activities](http://www.rspb.org/youth/activities), including making bird cake, or a bird feeder or nesting box out of recycled materials.

Binoculars are good for watching birds, and making sure they are feeding in the right place! Think about how children can get the scarecrow to move or make a noise (you could attach foil pie dishes as a necklace, or cut up carrier bags and use these as hair or decorations that rustle in the wind).

Michael Jones, early language consultant, and Kerry Sustins, childminder and early language lead practitioner on Suffolk's Every Child a Talker project

### Tips on how older children can help younger ones

- Older ones can help the younger children to make a 'scarecrow baby' using a babygro. They can help the younger ones decide what facial features he should have, and perhaps help them to add hair made out of wool.

*'Sing Dingle Dangle Scarecrow to introduce the idea of farms and fields full of crops'*