

# Portland Palissy Session Plan

## Activity Plan

**A creative hands-on session to help you and your community to begin to make biodiversity visible, and to start work on a nature audit of your neighbourhood.**

**Suggested Timeframe:** Set aside an hour



### **Resources:**

Cloths for protecting tables etc. clay, selection of clay tools, selection of nature identification books, gloves, Clipboards and pencil and paper for each participant. Ideally you will have a room with a few tables set up for a clay activity, and easy access to the outside.

### **Beginning and Ending your session:**

Give a brief introduction about the session, and what will be covered. Ask everyone to very briefly introduce themselves and their connection to the neighbourhood/area/project. At the end of the session, ask everyone to give feedback on one thing they enjoyed and one thing to improve for next time (you can ask people to write this on a post it, or use another method to record their answers.)

### **Identifying nature:**

You might want to focus on plant species and invertebrates initially for a first session, and then later could consider birds and animals. Explain to everyone that you are

going to make an eco-report together of the local area, perhaps focusing on one geographical location, like a green space, a corner of a park, or even a street where you know there is a range of plants.



Our Portland Palissy Ware Project is based on the work of French ceramicist Bernard Palissy, whose highly decorated ceramic plates and platters can be seen in museums all over the world.

Hand everyone a clipboard with pen and paper. Lead a short tour of the area, asking people to focus on the plants that have chosen to be there (rather than plants that humans have chosen to be present). Point out interesting plants, and share any knowledge you might have about them, in terms of uses, properties, histories. Look out for any bugs you see and draw those quickly for reference. Advise people that they can pick one or two of the leaves or flowers they see on the tour for making in clay, but give a warning about some plants being poisonous or irritants and provide gloves if needed.



Return to the space and support the group to first identify what they have found, adding the finds to a collaborative list and then begin making their plant and invertebrate species in clay. We found using tea strainers to push clay through makes really good grass, and we used rolling pins to roll out clay, and then impress leaves into the clay for good surface marks.

While they are working, roll out a plaque (ours are usually round) for everyone's contributions to be added to. Make sure you have some clay slip, which can be used like a glue to add their pieces firmly to the plaque. Photograph and make a note of all of the species identified and if you wish to officially record them, use an app like iNaturalist. You can also colour your plaque with slips or glazes. The plaque can become a good record of the local ecology.

