



DALLAS ARBORETUM
Education

Garden STEM at Home
Sound Map



WE GROW MINDS, TOO.



OBJECTIVE:

STUDENTS WILL CREATE A SOUND MAP OF A NATURAL AREA AROUND THEIR HOME, NEIGHBORHOOD OR SCHOOLYARD.

BACKGROUND

When we picture our kids making observations of nature, it often looks like this: a magnifying lens, a science notebook or a butterfly net. We traditionally think about observations being what we SEE in nature, and often times, we then ask kids to record these observations as words and images. Sound mapping is an activity that encourages families to observe nature in a distinct new way: using only sounds.

Sound maps help us to focus less on what we can see and instead on intently observing the natural world around us. By downplaying the importance of sight, sound mapping actually trains participants to center their concentration on the natural world around them and they couldn't be easier to make!

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Begin with a piece of cardboard or a blank notebook page.
2. Mark an 'x' in the middle of the board and this is your location in the map.
3. Find a quiet, natural space - it should be somewhere you can safely and easily visit which has other living things in or near it. You don't need to go to the middle of the woods. Right beside a tree at the park is great!
4. Then, for a set period of time (we recommend starting with 3-5 minutes), participants should sit quietly and listen for signs of nature around them.
5. Mark that source of that sound on your map using a small symbol. We recommend creating a quick legend as you make the map, but to not just use words to mark what you hear.
6. If you're not sure what something is, that's okay. Just create a way to remember what it sounded like and where it came from.
7. We recommend visiting the same spot on different times of day or different times of year. A sound map is likely to inspire more questions about the natural world. How does the same spot sound at a different time of day or year? What sounds are only heard in the evening? What was that strange clicking sound I heard? Was it an insect? Can I hear it again?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Sensory Trust Sound Map Examples:

<https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/resources/activities/sound-maps>

Sound Mapping Lesson Plan:

https://www.estuarypartnership.org/sites/default/files/Sound%20Mapping_Watershed%20Focus%20Lesson.pdf

Explore the Project Learning Tree Sounds Abound Family Activity:

<https://www.plt.org/family-activity/sounds-around/>

Sharing Nature by Joseph Cornell; ISBN: 978-1-56589-287-3