

ACTIVITY GUIDE

- 21ST CENTURY FOSSILS



Connecting creatively to the
landscape of the Wye Valley AONB and Forest of Dean

FORESTERS'
FOREST

ARTSPACE
CINDERFORD

 **HERITAGE**
FUND

wye valley **dyffryn gwy**
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Ardal o Harddwych Naturiol Eithriadol

21ST CENTURY FOSSILS



Plaster casts can be created from organic forms such as fern leaves, shells or even some vegetables such as carrots, and will have the look of a prehistoric fossil!

Activity rating

Suitable for all participants but some may need help with preparing the clay.

Preparation time

Approx. 15 minutes to prepare your table with the materials and natural objects.

Time required for activity

Approx. 45 minutes. About 30 minutes to create the impressed clay mould and another 15 minutes to mix and pour the plaster.

Shopping list

- o Plaster of Paris (from art & craft shops or online).
- o Air dry clay.
- o Rolling pins.
- o Natural objects to impress into clay.
- o Pouring jug.

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Step by step instructions

1. Cover the table with a cloth.
2. Roll out a ball of clay (roughly the size of an orange) to a thickness of about 2cm. Before you commit to one object, test out a few by pressing them into the clay. Sometimes this works well if you do it at an angle, as it looks more like a random fossil. Bigger or longer objects will need either more clay or will need to be rolled in such a direction that the natural form will fit inside it.
3. Some natural forms like leaves or flowers can be gently rolled into the clay. Carefully peel them out to reveal the very subtle but detailed imprint they will have left.
4. Once you have found an object/s you like the look of, roll out the clay again but this time curl up the edges with your fingers to create a small wall around the edge of about 1.5 cm. Make sure this is consistent around the edge, as the liquid plaster may spill over any parts of the wall that are too low.
5. Mix up your plaster in the jug by following the instructions on the packaging. Be warned that the plaster takes a while to set and you may think you need to add more plaster! Don't worry, just be patient.
6. Place all the moulds near each other in a small group and when the plaster is the consistency of double cream, pour it into each of the moulds, making sure it does not spill over the edge.
7. Leave to dry over night and then gently peel off the clay from the plaster 'fossil'.

Top Tips!

- Never pour wet plaster down a sink. It is best left to dry hard and then you can just tap it out into a bin.
- You can stain the plaster with a strong solution of tea or coffee if you want to give it a realistic effect by brushing it over and lightly wiping it off again.