

# THE WILD CITY

When you want to see trees, you head to a forest, orchard or park.  
When you want to visit a wilderness of trees, you will look for an ancient woodland, also known as old-growth and primary forests. But did you know you can find a forest in the city which we call an urban wilderness?



**Goal:** The pupils will discover an urban wilderness, work with maps, take photographs and discover the biodiversity and wilderness in a city.

**Who:** 6–9th grades and high school

**Where:** School surroundings and/or city

**When:** Mornings during the growing season

**You need:** Camera, mapping materials, atlases, drawing pads, crayons (or mobile phone or tablet with a camera and the relevant applications)

## 1. Map the wilderness and its development

Use the Time-lapse function on Google Earth and compare the greenery around the school in last ten or more years:


Find out if the amount of green area is increasing or decreasing.

Try to recognise and distinguish the parks and statutory greenery (planned artificial landscapes) from the areas of wild growth (like overgrown areas, courtyards, vacant lots, brownfield land...) and record these in a map.

Walk around your area and make sure everything has been mapped and add any smaller missing areas or features.

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## 2. Evaluate biodiversity

 Find a safe and accessible overgrown or unmaintained urban green space and map the trees there. You can also map herbs, mosses, and lichens but this could be a very challenging task. Find out what tree and shrub species are found on this wild land (*use Plantnet or atlases and simple field guides*).


Find out how many different trees and shrubs you can find in a 1 are (100 m<sup>2</sup>) area.

Gather the same data in a park and identify any differences in the diversity of the species between the two locations.

What do the species of trees and shrubs in the two areas have in common? If you survey multiple wild areas, do you see the same species popping up in each location?

Where is the wilderness in your area? Is it mostly on abandoned, rubble-strewn plots? Around old buildings? Overgrown gardens? Embankments of railways and roads? Abandoned orchards? Or in the surroundings of streams and rivers, wetlands and ponds?

## 3. Wilderness as an object for artistic expression

 The wilderness in the city is a natural rebel; it is romantic, scattered, often undesired, closed behind rusty fences and crumbling walls, but it is still ubiquitous. Announce a photo or multi-media competition with three categories and let your pupils look at the life around them from their perspective and with their creativity. Multiple media could include painting, writing and recording sounds...

Category 1: Life between stones and paving

Category 2: Jungles between houses

Category 3: Trees conquering the city

### REFLECTION AND SCIENTIFIC CONCLUSION

Conclude by sharing what everyone saw outside – how is urban wilderness changing? Look into its importance for city life (shade, humidity, birds and insects). What interesting discoveries were made? Where in your city is nature most colourful, have you found a new place to fall in love with, have you discovered a new spot that you had previously passed but never noticed?

How much green space is there in your city, and how much is developed (parks and gardens) and how much is wild?

Which places in your area are the most diverse in terms of trees and shrubs?

What new place have you discovered? Which “hidden gem” had you not known about before? What place is beautiful but nobody knows about it?

### WHAT CAN BE EVALUATED (EVIDENCE OF LEARNING):

The pupils researched historical and contemporary maps of the city for urban wilderness and its development; mapped a place and made lists of found species, herbarium items, photos...; participated in an art competition creating their works (photos, paintings, videos, audio recordings of the urban wilderness).

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