



Autumn Scavenger Hunt

Many mammals such as squirrels, mice, bears, and beavers spend much of the autumn months both eating and collecting as much food as they possibly can before winter comes. This will build them a warm and cozy layer of fat and also provide them with snacks throughout the winter when food is scarce. They must do all of this because these animals **hibernate** throughout the winter.

Some animals use hibernation as a way to survive the winter. Instead of trying to find food all winter long, they “sleep” for long periods of time. By barely burning any calories and after having built up a hefty layer of fat they are able to stay in one spot and hunker down for the harshest season. They also will create a stockpile of food as a backup to eat any time they may wake up.

In this activity you are going to be a squirrel and collect as many items as you can before winter comes. What are some things that a squirrel might need for winter? Food? Shelter? Would that shelter need to be warm? All of the items on the list below are things that you might find outside. You only have 30 minutes to complete this activity and then winter hits! Will you be able to hibernate and survive?

- Acorns, Maple Seeds, Black Walnuts (as many as you can find)
- Pine Cones
- Tree Bark (on the ground)
- Dry Leaf Litter
- Small Twigs
- Fluffy trash



Many of the items you collected are things that squirrels and mice and other hibernating creatures need to make their nests. They need things like dry leaves and grass to help insulate their homes to keep them as warm as possible. Do you know if our homes have anything similar to keep us warm?

The other items that you collected were things that these animals will either eat now during Autumn, or save for later to eat when food is much harder to find. Squirrels will either eat their acorns and seeds to build up a layer of fat, or they will bury them close to their nest so that they can be easily accessible during the winter.

Fun Fact: Squirrels are great gardeners! Squirrels will often forget where they hid their acorns or not find/need all of them through the winter and then the seeds will sprout in the spring!

When you are done, TLC is collecting NC native tree seeds to plant at our Williamson Preserve in Raleigh. If you would like, you can drop them off at either the Durham Office or at the Williamson Preserve in a plastic bag with a damp paper towel. Or you can leave them near a tree as a nice treat for your friendly neighborhood hibernators!

