

There's so much for children to explore and learn about in every season of the year – from the changing weather to animals, plants and produce. The beautifully detailed rollers in Let's Roll Seasons encourage children to look closely at the natural world, spot how it changes through the year and gain an understanding of the passage of time. Using the rollers will also develop fine motor skills, enrich vocabulary and lead into other creative seasonal activities.

### As the seasons roll by

Learning to use the rollers is great for children's fine motor control. The harder they press, the more detailed the picture that will emerge.



- The easiest way to use a roller is to push it away from your body. Several of the rollers show a vertical scene. Others can be rolled vertically, then the dough turned round.
- Children can move onto rolling the dough sideways across their body. As they learn to cross the midline of the body, they use both sides of the brain and improve their coordination skills. (All of the seasons include several rollers with horizontal scenes.)
- When children have rolled a scene, they can complete it using the stamp at the end of the roller. Some of the stamps allow them to finish off the image (such as by adding a flower head, fruit or baby animal), others are for adding in extra details.

- Children might enjoy combining different rollers to create a larger scene – such as creating a summer garden with different plants and flowers, or adding a wintery sky over a snowman and fir trees.



- As well as talking about the details on each scene, there are also plenty of things to count – how many eggs, sunflowers, apples or reindeer can you see?
- Create a nature table for the current season. As well as play dough and the rollers, you could include relevant natural items (such as flowers, feathers, leaves, seeds, acorns or twigs), loose parts (such as buttons, beads, pompoms or wooden objects), animal figures, labels, books and printed pictures.



The following pages offer ideas for using the rollers in each season of the year.

# Spring

Rollers show: daffodil and flowers, egg and bird's nest, blossom and orchard, lamb and sheep, froglets and tadpoles, duckling and duck

Several of the spring rollers show animals in different points of their life cycles. You can use these to compare the differences between various animals:

- Which animals lay eggs? Which animals have babies not in eggs?
- Which animals change in colour or shape as they grow?
- Think about the size difference between fully-grown animals and their young.
- Have the children seen any baby animals – in the wild or as pets?



Talk about the different habitats these animals live in – which ones are on land and which are on/in water? Create a springtime scene using several rollers with blue and green dough, and putting the rolled pictures together. If you're able to visit a park, pond, woodland or farm, children might see some of these animals for themselves.

Play spring detectives, using the rollers, Weather stones, printed pictures or mark-making to record what you detect:

- What can you hear, see or smell outside?
- How warm does it feel?
- What is the weather like?



## Daffodil and flowers roller:

- What other flowers can you spot? What insect can you see visiting the daffodils? What are they looking for (nectar and pollen)?
- Use green dough for the background and yellow dough to stamp a daffodil head. Can the children create a 3D trumpet from dough for their daffodils?
- Add to your scene using real or artificial flowers heads, buttons, leaves or insect figures.
- Daffodils are easy to create from yellow paper – cut out petals and add a painted tube or egg box cup for the trumpet.
- Have fun outside in a flower planting area, complete with compost, pots, tools and seeds or bulbs.

## Eggs and bird's nest roller:

- Encourage children to stamp one, two or three eggs in the nest.
- Add real or artificial eggshells, Yellow Door's Size Sorting Eggs or a nest for children to investigate.
- What do birds use to create their nest? Have a go creating your own nests with twigs, feathers and glue – 2D will be easier!
- Research what different eggs look like (such as a blackbird's, blue tit's or crow's). Can children paint some on paper and stick them to their nests?

## Blossom and orchard roller:

- Take cuttings of some real twigs with blossom on, if possible.
- Go on a blossom walk looking for trees with flowers on. What colours are they? You could make a tally chart to record the different colours. Do all trees flower at the same time?
- What happens to blossom when the wind blows? Measure how far blossom travels from a tree. Create your own blossom shower with tissue paper flowers!





### Lamb and sheep roller:

- Visit some lambs if you can! How do the lambs move?
- Why do sheep give birth in spring when it's starting to get warmer? How do sheep keep warm in the winter?
- Ewes normally have between one and three lambs – can the children use the stamp to add one, two or three lambs for each sheep they've rolled?
- Create lamb pictures by making a black handprint, then adding cotton wool, with a white fingerprint for an eye and a black dot made with the end of a twig.

### Froglets and tadpoles roller:

- Look closely at the scene when you've rolled it – can you spot frogspawn, tadpoles, froglets and frogs?
- Where do frogs lay their eggs? What do tadpoles and froglets need? What do they eat? Why is spring a good time for tadpoles to be born? (Is it cold like winter or dry like summer?)
- Create a frog life cycle picture. Use recycled bubble wrap or white pompoms for frogspawn, adding black dots with a permanent marker. Use a black pompom with a black paper tail for a tadpole. Paint an egg box cup green and add a green paper tail and pipe-cleaner legs for a froglet. Paint a small paper cup green and add pipe-cleaner legs for a frog. Can you create a pond for them to live in? Use the roller as a reference for your creation.
- Offer the Five Frogs on a Log wooden play set alongside a play dough pool for the frogs to jump into.



### Duckling and duck roller:

- How many ducklings do you think the duck might have? Can you stamp five little ducks? You could also add in the duck footprint stone from Let's Investigate Farmyard Footprints to create some duck footprint trails.
- Roll a mummy duck and stamp five little ducks on separate bits of play dough – use these to act out the song as you sing it.
- Visit some ducks!

### Let's talk – useful words

Daffodil, bulb, nectar, pollen, egg, nest, blossom, ewe, lamb, frogspawn, tadpole, froglet, frog, duck, duckling

## Songs linked to spring

*Five Little Speckled Frogs*

*Five Little Ducks*

*Mary Had a Little Lamb*

## Books about spring

*That's MY Flower!* by Alice Hemming

*Pip and Egg* by Alex Latimer

*Tad* by Benji Davies



## Summer

*Rollers show: sunflower and garden, strawberry and strawberry patch, seedhead and dandelions, swallow and rooftops, baby owl and mother owl, butterfly and flowers*

The summer rollers feature several types of plants at different points in their life cycles. Use these to talk about how plants grow and reproduce:

- Have a look at some real seeds (be aware of seed allergies) – are they all the same size or shape? How do they get from the plant to the soil? Children could act out the different ways seeds spread (such as rolling, blowing in the wind or sticking to animals).

- Plant some fast-growing seeds (such as cress or sweet williams) and look out for them sprouting.
- Talk about flowers – where have you seen flowers growing? Have you spotted any insects visiting them?

Use several rollers and play dough in different colours to create a summer scene. You could use blue for a sky full of swallows, green for a summer garden, and then red and other colours to add flowers and fruits.

Visit a park, pond, woodland or a garden, and look out for birds, insects, flowers, seeds and fruits. Play summer detectives, using the rollers, Sensory Play Stones Butterflies and Birds, Weather stones, printed pictures or mark-making to record what you detect:

- What can you hear, see or smell outside?
- How warm does it feel?
- What is the weather like?

### Sunflower and garden roller:

- After rolling the garden scene and adding stamped sunflowers, children could also add real or artificial flowers or leaves, sunflower seeds (check for allergies!) or buttons.
- Plant sunflowers and measure their heights – which is the tallest/shortest?
- When a display of real sunflowers has wilted, you could reuse the heads for printing – simply add brown paint to the centre of the flower and yellow onto the petals, then press them onto paper. Alternatively, cut the end of a cardboard tube into strips and use these to print a ring of yellow petals, before filling in the centre with brown.
- Have fun with gardening role play, using a selection of tools, gloves, compost, pots, seeds and flowers. Add in Jack and the Beanstalk wooden characters.



### Strawberry and strawberry patch roller:

- Roll a green strawberry patch and stamp lots of strawberries in red
- Enjoy a teddy bears' picnic, sharing strawberries equally among them
- Where are the seeds on a strawberry? A strawberry is the only fruit with seeds on the outside, and an average strawberry has 200 seeds!
- Grow your own strawberries – either outdoors or indoors from a young plant on a sunny windowsill.
- Enjoy a summer fruit salad. Children can carefully cut up soft fruit, practising their fine motor skills.

### Seedhead and dandelions roller:

- Talk about how dandelions change to a seedhead – do the same in the dough with the stamp! You could add real flowers, seedheads and leaves, or colour your dough yellow using dandelion petals.
- Have fun blowing seedheads – how many times do you need to blow to send all the seeds flying? Why do some seeds fly?
- Pick some dandelions and display them in a vase or cup. You could dig up a whole dandelion plant and talk about the long tap root, the leaves and the flower.
- Paint using dandelions as paintbrushes. Or alternatively, cut thin strips into the end of a cardboard tube and use it to print yellow dandelion flowers or white seedheads.



### Swallow and rooftops roller:

- Roll the rooftop scene and add swallows over them with the stamp. Talk about the pointed shape of their wings and watch a video to see how acrobatic they are.
- Talk about what swallows eat and how far they travel when they migrate (such as from Africa to the UK or from South America to North America).
- Use a tally chart with pictures of birds or Birds Sensory Play Stones and see how many you can spot.



### Baby owl and mother owl roller:

- After rolling the mother owl and stamping baby owls, children could add feathers, twigs and stars to the scene. You could also offer star or moon shaped cutters.
- What time of day does the scene show? Talk about nocturnal animals. Why do owls have such large eyes? Why is it helpful for them to have excellent hearing? What do they eat? Where do they live?
- Offer the roller alongside *Owl Babies* and other owl and woodland props, so children can use it to retell the story.
- Create some owl art by printing the body with sponges in white or grey paint, then adding a beak, eyes and feet.

### Butterfly and flowers roller:

- After creating the butterfly scene in play dough, children could add flowers, leaves, seeds and paper butterflies.
- Talk about the butterfly life cycle. The butterflies may have laid some eggs on the leaves of the plants in the rolled scene – what will hatch out of the eggs? Let's Roll Garden bugs includes a caterpillar roller.
- If you're lucky enough to see a butterfly visiting a flower, look carefully for its proboscis – what does it use it for?
- Create a butterfly small world play area using the Sensory Play Stones Butterflies and Flower stones.
- Discover how butterflies can travel thousands of miles (e.g. painted lady, monarch).



### Let's talk – useful words

Flower, fruit, seed, petal, stem, seedhead, migrate, nocturnal, caterpillar, chrysalis

### Books about summer

*Sam Plants a Sunflower* by Kate Petty

*Owl Babies* by Martin Waddell

*My Butterfly Bouquet* by Nicola Davies

*The Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle

### Songs linked to summer

*There's a tiny caterpillar*

*Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary*

*Ring a Ring O'roses*



## Autumn

*Rollers show: falling leaves and tree, blackberry and bramble, carved face and pumpkin, acorn and squirrel, spider's web and plants, apple and apple tree*

The plants on the autumn rollers can lead to talking about plant life cycles:

- What happens to the leaves on some trees in the autumn? What colours do they turn?
- What fruit and seeds feature on the rollers? Which ones can we eat? You might like to compare the different size and shape of seeds from a pumpkin, an apple and an acorn (check for seed allergies first).

Use several rollers to create an autumn scene using brown, red or orange for leaves, and other colours for fruits. You could add squirrel and spider figures, toy fruit and vegetables, buttons, leaves, seeds, twigs and pine cones.

Visit a park, woodland or a farm, and look out for leaves, seeds, berries, fruit, spiders, webs and squirrels. Talk about which of these are safe to touch and which we should just look at. Play autumn detectives, using the rollers, Weather stones, printed pictures or mark-making to record what you detect:

- What can you hear, see or smell outside?
- How warm/cold does it feel?
- What is the weather like?
- What do autumn leaves feel like when you stand on them?

### Falling leaves and tree roller:

- Roll the tree, stamp autumn leaves and add woodland animal figures.
- Collect fallen leaves and sort them by colour, shape and size. Use them to create patterns and pictures. Provide pictures of trees and their leaves for children to match the leaves to. Do any leaves match the Match Me: Sensory Leaf tiles shapes? Can they identify a real tree by its leaves – such as the distinctive shape of an oak leaf?
- Put a variety of leaves on paper, then use sponges to paint around them in autumn colours, creating leaf-shaped silhouettes.



### Blackberry and bramble roller:

- After rolling brambles and stamping blackberries, children could make extra blackberries with tiny balls of dough. For some messy outdoor painting, pick some blackberries and use them to paint with on a hard surface or paper.
- Why do brambles have thorns? How can we be careful not to hurt ourselves if we're picking blackberries? Which animals eat blackberries?
- After picking blackberries, use them to make crumble – maybe using apple as well. Alternatively, make a pie with ready-to-roll pastry.

### Carved face and pumpkin roller:

- After using the roller, children might like making a play dough pumpkin, then adding the face stamp to it.
- Cut open a pumpkin and find the stem, skin, flesh and seeds.
- Collect and compare different squashes and pumpkins, looking at their size, shape, weight, colours and patterns.
- Use your pumpkin to make soup or a pie, or simply roast it. You could also toast and eat the seeds (check for allergies).



### Acorn and squirrel roller:

- Roll the scene and add acorns for the squirrel to collect. Talk about how the squirrel is jumping – have the children ever seen a squirrel jumping or running? Press a real acorn into dough to see what pattern it makes.
- Collect acorns or conkers and use them to make patterns and pictures. Leaving them outside will allow animals to collect them afterwards. You could also offer the acorn and other seeds or fruits from Yellow Door’s Feast of Nature Sensory Play Set.
- Use acorns to make number arrays. If you add some soft toy squirrels, you can talk about how many each squirrel has in its stash.
- Paint acorns and add faces to them (with the cups as hats).
- Watch squirrels in the park – if you see one jumping, measure the distance between the trees to see how far they can jump.

### Spider’s web and plants roller:

- After rolling the scene and adding spider’s webs, talk about how detailed they are. Can the children spot any real webs outside? Holding a sheet of black paper behind can help show the structure more clearly.
- Tie two or three sticks together so they cross over in the middle, then use wool to weave spider’s webs.

### Apple and apple tree roller:

- After rolling the apple tree, children might like to add buttons for apples. This could lead into counting and adding activities – for example, if you put three green buttons on the tree and two red ones, how many are there altogether? Can the children make a repeating pattern with different coloured button apples?
- Try some different varieties of apple and talk about what they taste like. Which are sharp or sweet? You could even have a go at making apple juice.
- Do some printing with apples – you could use crab apples if there’s a tree nearby, as these are smaller for little hands. When you’ve finished, wash them and leave them outside for wildlife to enjoy.



### *Let’s talk – useful words*

Deciduous, evergreen, bramble, thorns, seeds, stem, flesh, skin, acorn, conker, teasel, web, weave, sharp, sweet, juicy

## Songs linked to autumn

*Way up High in the Apple Tree*

*Incy Wincy Spider*

*Dingle Dangle Scarecrow*

## Books about autumn

*The Oak Tree* by Julia Donaldson

*The Leaf Thief* by Alice Hemming

*Archie’s Apple* by Hannah Shuckburgh

# Winter

*Rollers show: bird and branches, snowflake and snow, holly and winter wreath, face and snowman, reindeer and mountain, star and fir tree*

The winter rollers feature deciduous and evergreen trees – use these to talk about how some trees lose their leaves in autumn and have bare branches in the winter, while others have leaves or needles on them all year round. Encourage children to look out for trees with and without leaves near your setting.

Use several rollers and play dough in different colours to create a winter scene. You might like to use dark blue for a wintery sky and white play dough for a snowy landscape, adding other colours for fir trees and berries. Children might like to add figures of snowmen, reindeer and polar animals, as well as artificial berries, stars, snowflakes, buttons and twigs.

Visit a park, pond, woodland or farm, and look out for trees with and without leaves, berries, birds and other animals. Play winter detectives, using the rollers, Weather stones, printed pictures or mark-making to record what you detect:

- What can you hear, see or smell outside?
- How warm/cold does it feel?
- What is the weather like?



## Bird and branches roller:

- Have the children seen a bird sitting in a wintery tree? Which birds stay here in the winter?
- Make bird feeders to help winter birds find food. You could record the birds that visit using a tally chart with pictures. Create a water area where birds can bathe and drink.
- Create an outdoor small-world winter woodland by sticking upright twigs into the ground. Add some woodland animal figures to hide among the 'trees', and perhaps a light dusting of flour for snow.

## Snowflake and snow roller:

- Use the roller with white cloud dough (made by combining one part baby lotion to two parts cornflour and kneading until smooth – add biodegradable glitter for extra sparkle). You could add the rolled snowy sky scene to polar small-world play scenes. Polar animals such as Little Lands Polar will love playing under the falling snowflakes.
- Make symmetrical paper snowflakes, or use lollipop sticks, decorating them with recycled craft materials, such as beads or bits of fabric. Talk about symmetry and repeating patterns.

## Holly and winter wreath roller:

- The picture created by this roller is ideal for adding extra bits to – such as leaves, pine needles, small pinecones and beads for berries. Children might also enjoy pressing pinecones into the dough to see the pattern they make.





- Have a look at real ivy or fir tree cuttings and have a go at creating a real winter wreath with them. (Avoid holly because of the prickly leaves and toxic berries.) If you'd rather use cuttings that are safer if children put them in their mouths, you could use woody herbs such as rosemary, lavender or sage. Alternatively, create a reusable winter wreath with paper leaves, fabric, beads and pinecones, sticking them onto a card circle.
- Pinecones are also great for an open-ended craft activity – children can simply push small soft items between the scales, such as pompoms, bits of pipe cleaner, fabric scraps or screwed up tissue paper.



#### Face and snowman roller:

- After rolling your snowman and adding his face, add buttons, twigs, and even a felt hat and scarf. Use him as inspiration for 3D model snowmen, made from pompoms or cotton wool.
- Homemade snow is fun to play with and very sensory. Simply mix equal parts of bicarbonate of soda and cornflour, then slowly add water until it reaches a powdery consistency that's damp enough to squash together. Small-world animals will love playing in the snowdrifts.

#### Reindeer and mountain roller:



- After rolling the winter scene, add figures of deer and other animals that live in wintry habitats. Add in Let's investigate Polar Footprints for extra play value.
- Research reindeer. Where do they live? What do they eat?
- Create a reindeer picture using thin twigs (such as from a silver birch) and paper shapes. From brown paper, cut out a large rectangle for the body and a smaller triangle for the head, then round off the corners on both shapes. Add ears, eyes and nose, as well as twigs for legs and antlers, with optional evergreen foliage for trees.

#### Star and fir tree roller:

- Mix pine needles into your play dough – or use rosemary leaves for a similar look and an aromatic dough. Decorate the tree you roll with buttons, stars and beads.
- Make paper or card Christmas trees and decorate them in a similar way.



#### *Let's talk – useful words*

Deciduous, evergreen, fir, snowflake, symmetrical, pine needles, pinecones, reindeer, antlers

## Songs linked to winter

*The Holly and the Ivy*

*Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*

*Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*

## Books about winter

*Over and Under the Snow* by Kate Messner

*The Snowflake* by Benji Davies

*Winter Sleep: A Hibernation Story* by Sean Taylor and Alex Morss