

South London Botanical Institute



Where can I take my class to enjoy new experiences in science, nature, arts, and local history?



South London Botanical Institute

323 Norwood Road

London

SE24 9AQ

Phone: 020 8674 5787

Email: info@sbi.org.uk

What can we do there?

A half-day visit to the historic Institute will be tailored to your learning needs. Our professional educators and artists will encourage hands-on, participative discovery, which might include a combination of the following:

Plant Science

We explore different ways to find out about plants, using the historic library, the herbarium with over a hundred thousand pressed flower specimens, and microscope specimens in the laboratory. We like to try some eye-opening experiments with seeds, and we can explore making and using simple keys to find out what the names of twigs and flowers are too.



Arts

Working with artists, we use the lush garden and the art room to collect leaves and other natural objects, using these to make prints and other artwork. Sun-printing is a speciality which has a long affinity with botanists, We can also offer collage, mythical mask-making and other arts activities, and we can link these with your science requirements as required.

History – Local and National

The Institute was set up a hundred years ago by Allan Hume, who wished to bring an interest to working people in Tulse Hill. It is little changed since then and evokes the period when ladies wore long dresses and carriages rolled up the drive. Hume himself had been a civil servant and political reformer in British governed India. He became a critic of the British occupation. Committed to Indian independence, he was one of the key figures in setting up the Indian National Congress Party. He was also known as the 'father of Indian ornithology' for his work in exploring the continent's bird life.

We can help you to explore these themes using historic artefacts, classroom information, words, and pictures.



Sample sessions

Plant parts

Using plants in the garden and specimens from the herbarium we identify plant and flower parts. We might explore different leaf shapes through artwork or look at seeds under the microscope and then plant some of our own.

People and plants

Plants are crucial for the survival of the human race. We focus on the use of plants for food and medicine, using plants from the garden's medicinal bed to create our own herbal remedies.

Victorian plant hunters

Based in a Victorian house with many of its original features, we can help bring the Victorians to life. Using the garden, herbarium and a variety of historical artefacts we play the part of Victorian plant collectors, pressing our own flowers to take back to school.

Trees

We explore the different trees in the garden, how they change with the seasons and how they disperse their seeds. We use (and maybe even make our own) keys to help identify trees. We might also visit Brockwell Park for further activities.

Plants in their environment

A scavenger hunt in the garden and a detailed look at our fascinating carnivorous plant collection show the ingenious ways plants adapt to their environment.

Habitats and food chains

Plants play an important role in providing homes and food for wildlife. We explore the varied habitats in our garden and make bird feeders or insect houses to take home.

A visit to SLBI is ideal for:

- Encouraging nursery-aged children to use their senses to explore the natural world
- Key Stage 1 and 2 children studying Life Processes and Living Things (Sc2)
- Linking Science with the Literacy, Numeracy, Art and History sections of the National Curriculum
- Bringing a new dimension to plant science and local history at Key Stage 3 and 4

What will the children think?

The Institute is a bit different. It is not a museum or a visitor attraction, it feels old and has an atmosphere. We encourage children to explore and contribute at their own pace. We try to provide a variety of role models among the adults who lead the groups – many of whom are professional botanists or environmental educators.

Quotes from children participating in our pilot project during the summer holidays

'This is cool!'
'Can I hold this book as we go around?'
'This is the best place'
'I don't want to go home'

Is it safe?

We put safety first and foremost. We risk assess our activities and inform you of any expected behaviour to minimise risks, so you can help us to keep an eye on children's safety. We ask you to let us know of any behavioural needs or other considerations.

Great, how do I book?

Visits are available on **Tuesdays, Wednesday mornings** and **Fridays**, through the autumn, spring and summer. Some other days are available, so if you would like a particular date please ask.

Visits last a half day – morning, afternoon, or after school. We suggest a packed lunch to be taken in nearby Brockwell Park, either on the way to or from the Institute.

SLBI has funding from the City Bridge Trust to cover our education work, so visits from schools and youth groups are currently without charge. However, we do encourage each group to make a donation to support the work of the Institute.

To book a visit or for more information please contact SLBI's Education Officer, Glenda Hall, by phone on 020 86745787 or email at glenda@slbi.org.uk

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