



Riverford Organic Farmers Ltd, Buckfastleigh, Devon, TQ11 0JU

A visit to the Riverford Farm and Field Kitchen Garden offers school age children an opportunity to see organic and regenerative farming first hand and learn why it's so crucial for a sustainable future.

They will see vegetables growing and be able to harvest and taste them straight from the soil. Visit our newly created woodland and agroforestry nut tree project, see plenty of wildlife (there is up to 50% more wildlife on organic farms) and learn about how regenerative farming is vital for the future of our planet.

Example topics and activities:

- Why Organic farming?
- Biodiversity, pollination and companion planting
- The importance of soil health
- Our new woodland and our agroforestry 'nut tree' project
- Seasonality and food miles
- Harvesting and veg tasting in the Field Kitchen Garden
- Our reservoirs to irrigate the farm and pond dipping

Visits to Riverford are not only engaging and interactive, but they also allow students to unleash their imaginations with learning experiences that are enjoyable and memorable, while also being highly educational.



Riverford Farm Tour Summary

Lesson plan

Lesson one:

Location: the field kitchen polytunnel and kitchen garden

Main leader: Penny Hemming

Summary

The farm tour can be adapted depending on the age of the school children attending. Tour last approx. 2 hours. The aim is to provide an overview of the sorts of food grown on the farm, the food sold by the business (and where it comes from if not grown on the farm) and to gain an idea of what some of the food tastes like and how it is grown alongside an overview of the business itself for older children. Toilet facilities are available at this location.

tour summary

- Penny asks the school group where they are today At Riverford Farm and what kind of farm it is. There is then a talk about all the different kinds of farms; arable, pig farm, dairy farm, veg farm etc. there is a discussion about what kind of farm we are and how we share the land with the dairy herd. Penny also explains and explores what organic means.
- Penny brings out a fruit and veg box and goes through the items within getting the kids to name the veg/fruit and see if they know where it comes from. In doing so we cover different parts of the world and different climates/weather patterns. Also gives a chance to talk about healthy eating, 5 plus a day etc.
- Walk over to the polytunnel and Field Kitchen Garden and explain what we grow here and how we supply our restaurant on the site alongside the wider farm supplying boxes.
- Talk about how many people work here now and the many different jobs it takes to run Riverford. Seasonal workers. How many boxes we sell per week. What current problems we are facing.
- Walk through the tunnel and when possible, letting the group taste some produce, maybe an edible flower, a tomato, a type of basil, a slice of cucumber, a Cucamelon etc.
- Talk about some of the crops and how we grow them. Refer to some of the commercially grown crops to give people an idea of scale. IE that we plant around 17,000 tomato plants
- Point out bio control within the polytunnel and explain why we need it, what its for etc.
- Cover what you need to grow anything. Soil, fertility, light, heat, seeds, Water etc Talk about water and how we harvest most of our own water and how we need to build another reservoir because of climate change and hotter drier summers. Talk about the cost of doing so.
- Walk past the bees (if appropriate for the group) and talk about them and pollination.
- Walk down through the field kitchen garden, looking at some crops.
- Walk to the pack houses and point out what goes on in there. Explain grade out and how it works and how we support social enterprises with veg/fruit and how it's a great perk to co-owners.
- Talk about the fact we are an Employee-owned business and how this works.
- If appropriate and time allows walk through the offices to show how many non veg growing people it takes to run a business.

Lesson 2

Biodiversity focused farm tour

Points covered:

- **Food chains (voles, birds of prey, insects, plants)**
- **Animals found on the farm (dormouse, reptiles, birds, curl buntings, small mammals and badgers)**
- **Agroforestry and the benefits to wildlife and people and climate**
- **Mixed farming and biodiversity in general**
- **Organic farming**

Summary of the tour:

Maximum 1.5km walk lasting up to 2 hours approx.- can be lengthened or shortened depending on age group. Start off by brief introduction to the person leading the tour (usually Ed Scott, Assistant Harvest Manager). The tour has a biodiversity focus and discussing things such as carbon capture, agroforestry and farm wildlife.

Walk down past the bungalow (wet weather classroom for school groups) into Bumpston Meadow. Point out the little re-wilding spot on the left- how it is re-wilding and we just keep down bramble to keep paths open.

Will talk about Bumpston Field- vegetables growing/ or fertility building grass and clover mix.

Walk over the little footbridge over stream to the reservoir- talk about the wildlife there- the usefulness of the reservoir- climate change/ look for tadpoles/frogspawn depending on time of year. Look at the reptile hibernacula- lift a couple up to see if there are any slow worms/ grass snakes etc.

Walk up through the elder plantation – talk about what it is grown for- can possibly look at the newly planted woodland. Can explain the difference between different types of hives and different types of bees as there are also bee hives in this location.

Walk through soft fruit area where blackcurrants, redcurrants and gooseberries are growing. Look into Barkingdon Pathfield with new tree planting to protect watercourse, large oak tree in the centre, wild bird seed mixture and small copse. Also often salad grown in the summer.

Walk back down through soft fruit over larger footbridge and look at dormouse tubes. Go over the stream, possibility to look at more dormouse tubes and reptile patches if time available. Walk along the bottom of Bumpston Meadow back up to the bungalow. Can talk about the huge variety of dandelions- kids can each pick a dandelion leaf to see just how varied they can be.