

This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Neil

Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Beth

And I'm Beth.

Neil

Being in nature has benefits for our physical and mental health, so wouldn't it be good if instead of giving you a bottle of pills, your doctor recommended spending time in nature?

Beth

That's an interesting idea, Neil. Being outdoors always makes me feel better, and in Japan there's even a word for it - *shinrin-yoku* – translated into English as **forest bathing**. **Forest bathing** is a type of relaxation that involves being calm and quiet amongst the trees and using all your senses to observe nature around you, whilst breathing deeply.

Neil

It sounds wonderful, Beth! In this programme, we'll be hearing how one of the world's oldest building materials, wood, is being used in new ways to build a greener future. And, as usual, we'll be learning some useful new vocabulary as well.

Beth

Great, but first I have a question for you, Neil. Britain used to be covered in trees. In Roman times, it's estimated that as much as 40% of the land was forest. Trees provided wood, the building material needed for many things including buildings, furniture, and ships. So how many trees do you think were needed to build the HMS Victory, Nelson's famous ship at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805? Was it:

- a) 4,000 trees?
- b) 5,000 trees? or,
- c) 6,000 trees?

Neil

Well, I have no idea. But I'll guess it was 5,000 trees.

Beth

OK, Neil, I'll reveal the correct answer at the end of the programme. Throughout history, buildings in Britain have been made of **timber**, trees that are grown so their wood can be used as a building material. But in modern times, this has mostly been done by man-made materials - brick, concrete and steel. One of those arguing for a return to wood is architect, Michael Ramage, talking here to BBC Radio 4 programme, Rare Earth:

Michael Ramage

There is some **compelling** evidence to show that children in schools made of wood learn better... they have greater concentration, lower stress, lower heartbeats. And there's compelling evidence to show that patients in hospitals recover better in both rooms made of wood or other natural materials, and also in rooms that have views of nature out the window.

Neil

Michael believes there is compelling evidence for the health benefits of wood. If something is **compelling**, it's so convincing that you believe it. As evidence, he gives examples - that wooden schools help children learn.

Beth

But there's another compelling reason to build with wood – the carbon which wood captures helps combat climate change. It's why many governments around the

world want to replace the carbon intensive production of concrete and steel with bio-based materials like wood.

Neil

Here's architect, Michael Ramage, again, describing the possibilities of wooden buildings to BBC Radio 4's, Rare Earth:

Michael Ramage

We look at the possibilities of building with wood and other materials we can grow – bamboo, **hemp**, flax... and how we can use them **intelligently** as replacements for steel and concrete in the world that we create around us. And we've looked at **skyscrapers**, we've looked at housing, we've looked at schools, and there's a whole range of buildings that we can build if we use wood well.

Beth

Michael builds with natural materials which can be sustainably grown, including bamboo and **hemp** – a family of plants which are used to make many products such as rope and cloth. He thinks these natural, bio-based materials will work if they are used **intelligently** – in a clever, intelligent way.

Neil

A good example of this is plywood, the first new material in construction since the invention of reinforced concrete 100 years ago. Tests prove that plywood made from layers of pine, which are laid crossways and then glued together, is as strong as steel. It's already been used to build **skyscrapers**, the very tall modern buildings you often see in cities – an 85 metre high skyscraper in Norway, and an even taller one, at 87 metres the world's tallest, in Milwaukee, USA.

Beth

Strong, relaxing and eco-friendly – it seems that building with wood is good for the future as well as the past, which reminds me of my question, Neil.

Neil

Yes, you asked me how many trees were used as timber for Nelson's famous warship, HMS Victory, and I guessed it was 5,000...

Beth

Which was close, but the wrong answer, I'm afraid. It was even more, around 6,000 trees, most of which were oak, with some timbers over half a metre thick! OK, let's recap the vocabulary we've learned in this programme starting with **forest bathing**, being in nature and immersing your senses in the experience for its physical and mental health benefits.

Neil

Timber is trees grown so the wood can be used for building houses.

Beth

If an argument or evidence is **compelling**, it's strong, convincing and believable.

Neil

The adverb **intelligently** means done in a way showing intelligence and skill.

Beth

Hemp is a family of plants, some of which are used to make rope and strong cloth.

Neil

And finally, a **skyscraper** is a very tall modern building, usually in a city. Once again our six minutes are up, but remember to join us again next time for more trending topics and useful vocabulary, here at 6 Minute English. Goodbye for now!

Beth

Bye!

VOCABULARY

forest bathing

being in nature and immersing your senses in the experience for its physical and mental health benefits

timber

trees that are grown so the wood can be used for building houses

compelling

so strong and convincing that it makes you believe or accept it

intelligently

in a way showing intelligence and skill, or the ability to learn

hemp

family of plants, some of which are used to make rope and strong cloth

skyscraper

very tall modern building, usually in a city