

James Weeks

Ground-level (Touching)

for one performer

2025

In a garden, yard, park, on a doorstep, or anywhere a wild plant such as a weed is growing, prepare by immersing yourself in the sound environment; with eyes closed, focusing on each sound in turn and gradually immersing yourself within their polyphony (see Polyphonic Listening). Continue until you feel calm, focused and attentive, then open your eyes.

Select a single wild plant or weed, and get as close as you can to it. Close your eyes again.

Recording yourself on a voice memo app or other recording device, describe the plant in as much detail as you can. Speak quietly, directly into the device, as if you were recording a memo for yourself only (you are). Describe it in any way you wish, using analytical or poetic language as desired, but try to capture as much detail as possible.

Only touch the plant. Keep your eyes closed and do not look at it.

Leave pauses between each observation. Listen to yourself speaking within the sound environment, and its absence when you stop.

When you have finished describing the plant, either finish the piece, or move to the next plant adjacent to the one you have just described, and continue after a pause.

Finish the piece when you want by turning off the device.

Multiple performers can perform the piece at once, as long as they are sufficiently far apart to be able to concentrate solely on their own work. Any audience members should be situated among the performers and should not move during the (very quiet) performance.

*This piece can be performed alongside **Ground-level (Drawing)** and/or **Ground-level (Looking)**, or their recordings superimposed later, as desired.*

after Dürer
July 2025

Extension:

At a later time and in a different space, listen back to the recording and remember the plant and the sensation of touching it.

Select one element of the plant as you experienced it, such as a texture, form or shape. Play back the recording in the room, and on a soft instrument (strings, guitar, flute, clarinet, for example) or voice, attempt to recreate that element in sound as the recording is playing.