

Greening and Growing Together: Pre School and Early Learning

Let's explore why plants are good for us and what we need to do to care for them. We will use our bodies, recycled materials and treasures from nature to get growing.

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People

We explore who we are and get to know our family and our community by building a Family Forest.

Find activity sheets on the next pages.

Investigate

Each family is special and unique. Who is in your family? What is special about your culture? Who do you know in your community? Complete this activity sheet together: **Let's talk about Family.**

Plan

You're going to build a Family Forest. Before you begin, check you have playdough or have the ingredients to make some (plain flour, salt, cream of tartar, vegetable/canola oil). You will also need an ice cream container lid or a plate.

Take action

A small group of trees is called a grove. A large group of trees is called a forest! Family and community act like protective nursery trees for young children, providing safe spaces for them to grow and develop.

Key words

Me, family, community, love, care, sapling, tree, leaves, grove, forest.



Watch the video above and use the activity sheet **Building a Family Forest** to help with making your Family Forest.

Monitor

Take a picture of each child's Family Forest. Take turns talking about who is in their Family Forest and their special relationships.

Celebrate

Place all the Family Forests together on a table to display them, and invite parents and carers to have a look at them during drop off or pick up.

Family Forest: Let's talk about Family



In nature there are nursery trees – trees that cover and protect vulnerable saplings until they grow strong and large enough to break through the canopy and stand on their own.

Family and community act like nursery trees for young children, providing safe spaces for them to grow and develop.

Materials

- Pencils, crayons and textas.

Task

- As a family, write answers to the below prompts. Perhaps share a family picture or draw a 'special people' picture. This activity will spark conversation before you build your Forest Family in the next activity.

Each family is special and unique. Who is in your family?

Which grown-ups are special to you and help you feel safe and loved? Do you have brothers or sisters? How about grandparents? Special friends? Carers?

What is a food your family eats on special holidays and celebrations?

Who is someone that is not a member of your family, but still special to you? e.g. community members

Building a Family Forest



Each family is unique and all families are to be celebrated!

Learning about family and community is an important part of a child's growing identity. This Family Forest activity helps children explore their own family connections while also learning about forest systems in nature and how the trees work together to form a healthy environment.

Materials

- Loose Parts (small sticks, leaves, seed pods).
- Playdough Ingredients (flour, water, cream of tartar, salt, oil, and plates or ice cream container lids).
- Mixing bowl and spoons, saucepan and stove top.

Tasks

- Make playdough together – page 2
- Collect loose parts (small sticks, leaves, and seed pods) – page 3
- Assemble your Family Forest together – see example below.



Make Playdough

This recipe makes the perfect amount for 1-2 children

Ingredients:

- 1 cup plain flour
- 1 cup water
- 2 tablespoons cream of tartar
- 1/3 cup table salt
- 1 tablespoon vegetable or canola oil
- **Gluten-free ingredients:**
- 1 cup baking soda
- 1/2 cup corn starch
- 3/4 cup water

Method:

- In a medium saucepan: combine flour, cream of tartar and salt
- Add water, and mix, adding oil and mix till combined
- Cook on medium/low and keep stirring for several minutes
- Once the dough thickens and sticks to the spoon, it is nearly done
- Cool on a plate
- Store in a sealed bag or container



Collect Loose Parts

On a nature walk or in the playground, have each child find:

- About ten sticks no longer than their hand
- Leaves
- Seeds and seed pods
- Any other special items e.g. stones
- Sort the loose parts into groups according to size and type

Remember! Only collect items off the ground that do not look sharp or prickly. If a plant has dropped the loose parts, that means it no longer needs them. But if they are still on the plant, then the plant is using them and we must leave them where they are.



Make a Family Forest

Begin by giving each child a plate or ice cream container lid and a ½ cup portion of playdough. Help the children to:

- Pat or roll the playdough flat on the plate
- Select a stick to represent themselves and place it in the middle of the plate
- Select sticks to be important people who live at home with the child, and place them near the “child stick”
- Choose other sticks that represent friends or special people in the child’s life to add
- Decorate with leaves, seed pods and any other special loose parts



In nature there are nursery trees – trees that cover and protect vulnerable saplings until they grow strong and large enough to break through the canopy and stand on their own. Family and community act like nursery trees for young children, providing safe spaces for them to grow and develop.

Plants

We learn how to grow plants from seeds, what plants need to grow, and how to keep a Garden Journal.

Find activity sheets on the next pages.

Investigate

What do you know about seed germination? Complete this ordering activity: **Stages of Seed Germination** and learn **What Seeds Need to Grow**.

Plan

Gather supplies to complete the My Garden Journal activity sheet (paper, pencils, stapler). Procure some seeds (peas in cool weather or beans in warm weather), potting mix, spray bottles and toilet paper rolls (one per child).

Take action

Learn how [Planting in Toilet Rolls](#) works, then make your own using the activity sheet **Planting in Toilet Rolls**. Alternatively, [use newspaper to make paper pots](#).

Why not also try [Growing Seeds in Recycled Containers](#)?

Key words

Seed, seedling, germinate, plant, grow, journal, harvest.



Monitor

Water your plants and keep them safe.

Complete the observation activities in **My Garden Journal**, checking on the plants weekly.

Celebrate

Complete the paper collage artwork in **My Garden Journal** and display for parents and carers to see.

Send seedlings home to plant in home gardens. Or, plant in the garden at school.

Stages of Seed Germination



Explore the order of events in seed germination!

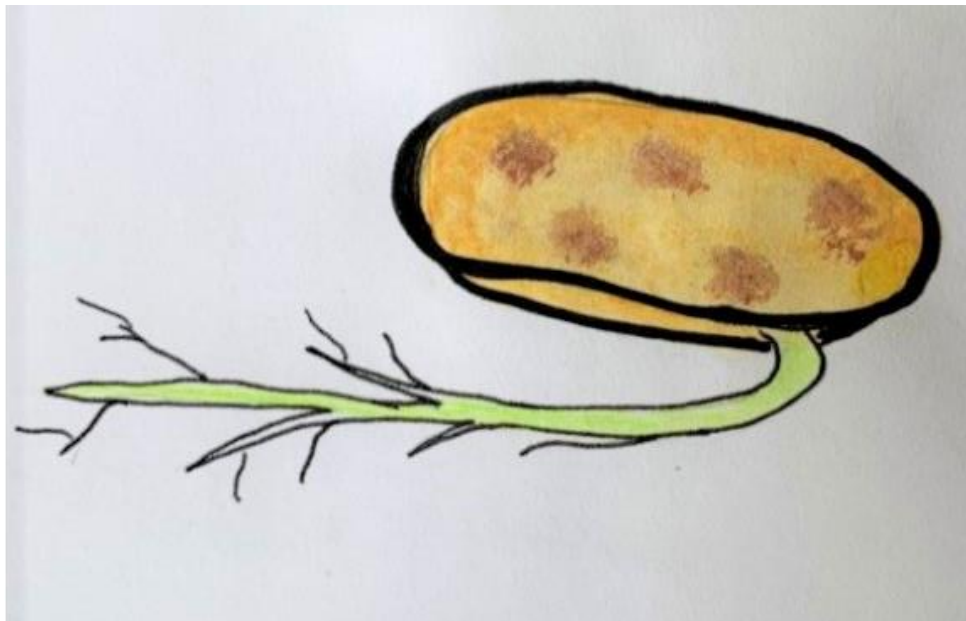
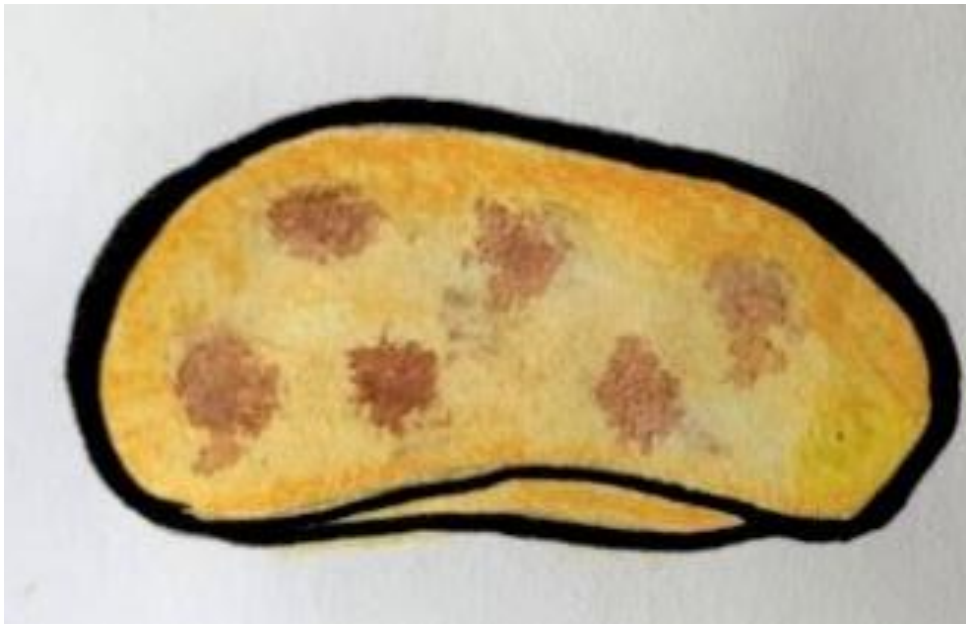
Seed germination is exciting and has several distinct phases! This simple card game helps children learn the sequence of transformations that a seed undergoes below the soil.

Materials

- next page - printed for each child
- Paper
- Colour printer
- Scissors.

Task

- Print and cut out each of the Seed Cards on page 11. Give each child 3 cards and ask them to put them in order. Children then compare their answers with their peers.
- **Before they begin...**
- Discuss seed germination and share the new words: seed, *germination*, *rootlet*, *seedling*, *leaves*.
- The process of seed germination has 3 stages: seed --> 1. rootlet goes down --> 2. stem grows up --> 3. leaves form on stem



What Do Seeds Need to Grow?

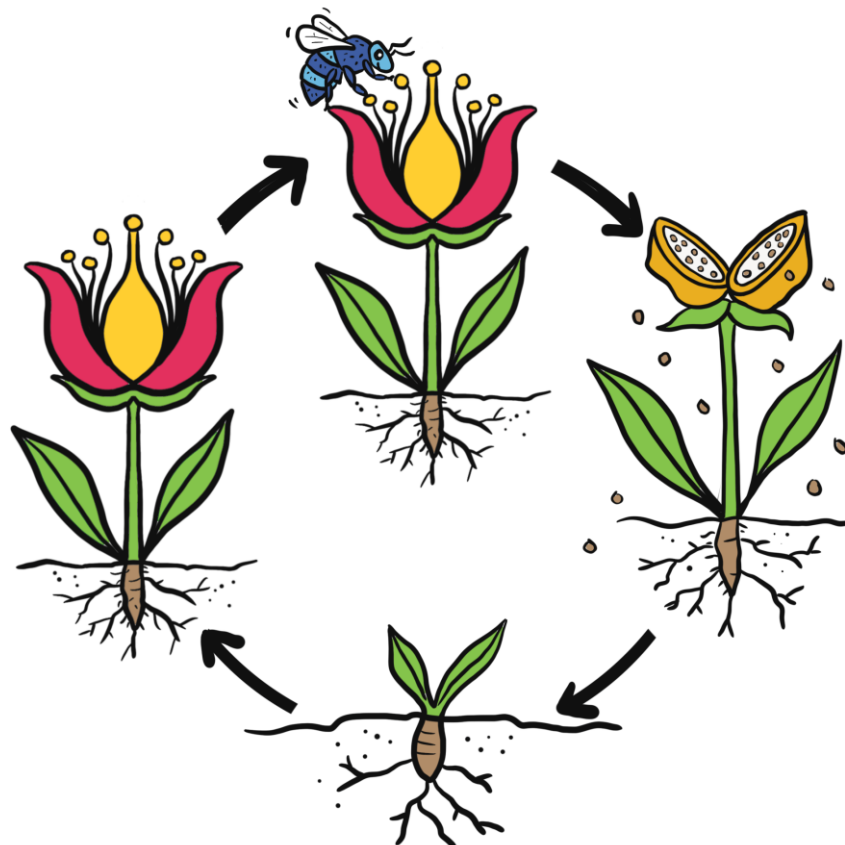


Use childrens' love for dramatic play to enact what a seed needs to grow!

Seeds need the right light, warmth, and humidity to germinate and grow. While the needs of seeds varies, this activity is a great place to start with pre-schoolers! We recommend doing this activity outside in nature.

1. Children sit in a circle to:

- Discuss that all living things have certain needs to grow and thrive. Ask *'What do children need to grow?'*
- View the picture of the Plant Lifecycle and show the stage in the photo where the seed is dropping from the plant to the soil below.



Instructions

2. Dramatic Play:

- Select 5 children to be the actors. Two curl up on the ground as little seeds. The remaining three children will be the rain, and the sun, and soil – see hand motions on page 3. Have them practice their motions and sounds so they know what to do when prompted. See hand motions on page 14.
- Ask all of the children ‘what do we need to give these seeds to help them to grow?’ When students call out their answer (e.g. soil), the child who is acting this role does the action around the two seeds.
- Ask ‘can the seeds start to grow yet?’ Recalling the 3 needs of seeds, they will need to answer ‘No’ because not all 3 needs have been met yet. Remind the students that plants need all of their needs met, not just one.
- Continue the game until all of the soil, sun and water actors have performed around the seeds.
- The other children can call out ‘grow, grow, grow, grow!’ while the little ‘seeds’ slowly uncurl, stretch, stand up, and put their arms high as little leaves.
- Celebrate with a cheer!
- Repeat so that all the children get a turn in the pretend play.

Water!

Children wiggle their fingers to imitate rain falling and say “pitter patter” or make up your own rain sound.



Soil!

Children pat the ground, and say “pat, pat” to show how we gently touch the soil.



Sunshine!

Children hold their arms out like sun rays and say “sunshine, sunshine” or make up your own sun sound.



Planting in Toilet Rolls



Combine a hands-on activity with recycling!

Watching seeds germinate and grow is a truly captivating experience, even more so when it's a seed you have planted yourself! This activity will strengthen children's connection to nature and provide an opportunity to learn about reusing common household items.

Materials

- Toilet Paper Rolls
- Textas
- Scissors
- Potting mix
- Seeds (see below)
- Watering can or spray bottle
- Rubber bands
- Tray/s to hold the rolls



Bean seeds for Spring/Summer



Pea seeds for Autumn/Winter



Instructions

Teachers get ready beforehand by preparing the toilet roll 'pots' for the children to plant in. Be sure to collect enough toilet rolls for each child to have their own.

Teacher's Task: Prepare the toilet rolls

Step 1

Label each toilet roll with a child's name.



Step 2

Cut short slits in the bottom of each toilet roll.



Step 3

Fold the slits inward to close the bottom of the roll.



Step 4

Use rubber band to secure several rolls together, sitting in a container with the names facing outwards so they can be seen.



Children's Activity: Plant the seeds

Step 1

Use a spoon to scoop potting mix into the toilet paper rolls. Use fingers to press the potting mix down and repeat filling until the soil is nearly to the top of the tube.



Step 2

Add 1 seed to each tube.



Step 3

Cover the seed with a little more potting mix and press down firmly.



Children's Activity: Plant the seeds

Step 4

Water the seed with a watering can or misting bottle until it is well moistened.



Step 5

Place your toilet rolls in a sunny location (indoors in a bright window, or outdoors in a sunny space). Check daily and repeat watering if the potting soil starts to become dry. Do not overwater or the seeds could rot.



Step 6

Once the seeds have sprouted and grown two sets of leaves, they can be planted into the garden! You can even plant the toilet paper roll as it will decompose and feed the soil.



My Garden Journal



Name: _____

Let's learn how to observe growth in plants and keep a Garden Journal!

Use this journal to record your learning. You will plant a seed, discuss plant needs (sun, soil and water), record what happens to the seed in the first few weeks of life and then celebrate your seed success!



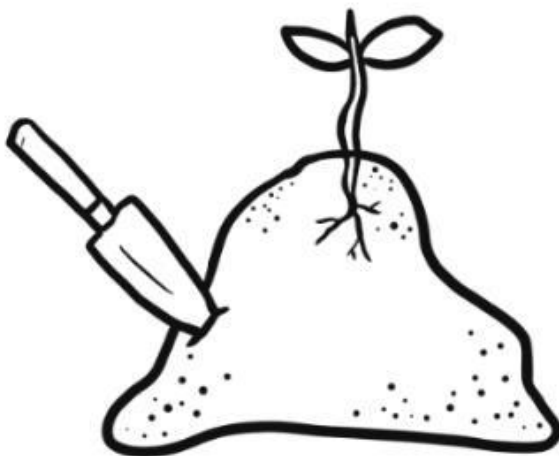
1. Planting the Seed!

Materials:

seeds, potting mix, spray bottles, paper pots or toilet rolls.

Task:

Plant your seeds, water them and put them in a safe place.



2. What does a seed need to grow?

Materials:

- Coloured pencils or crayons - yellow, brown and blue.

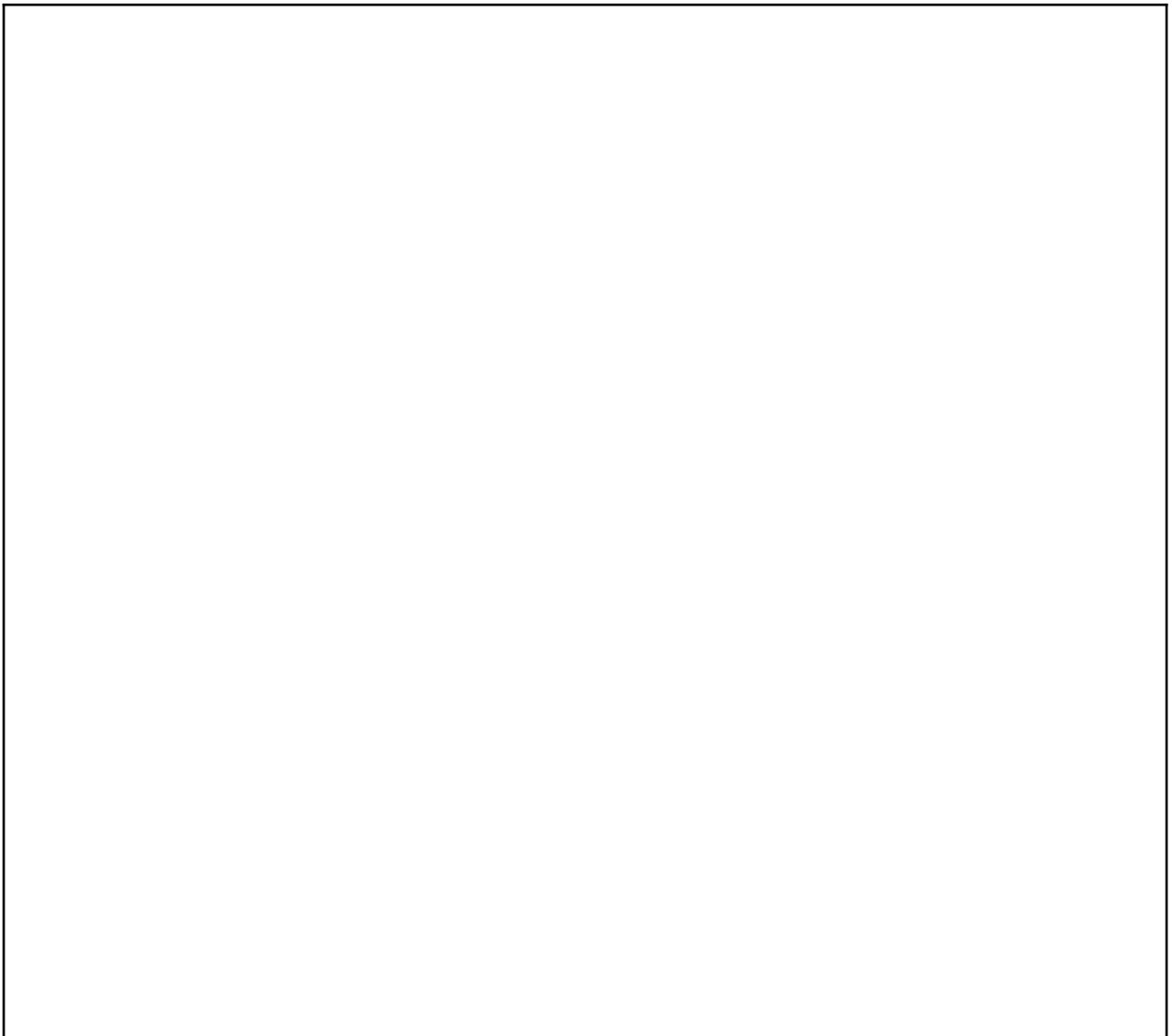
Task:

- Draw a picture that shows a plant's needs. Then, check that your seeds are going to have these needs met. Do your seeds have enough sunlight, soil and water?

Yellow - sunlight

Brown - soil

Blue - water



3. What changes are happening to the seed?

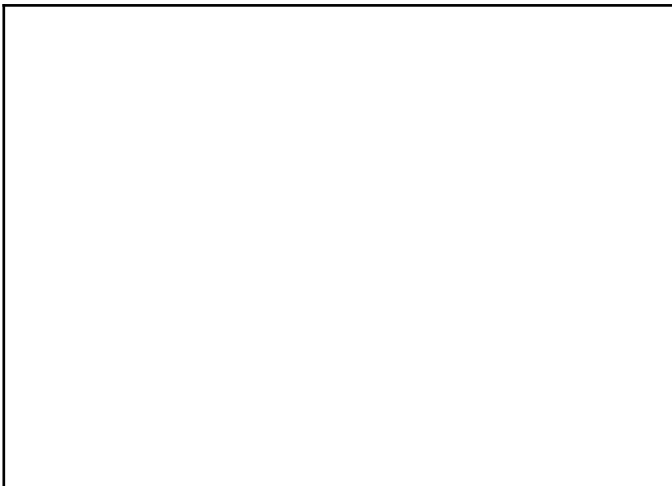
Materials:

- Pencils or crayons.

Task:

- Wait 2 weeks after planting your seeds or until you start to see changes occurring. Use the boxes below to draw those changes at weeks 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Week 2



Week 3



Week 4



Week 5



3. Celebrate your seed success!

Materials:

- Coloured tissue paper pre-cut into small squares, glue.

Task:

- In the box (next page) or on another sheet of paper, create a colourful paper collage that celebrates the magic of plant growth. Use the examples below for inspiration:



My Garden Journal: Paper Collage

Places

Exploring nature near us is an important part of how we develop our sense of place and connection. We'll go on a nature walk and make a Nature Artwork.

Find activity sheets on the next pages.

Investigate

Whether we live in the city or the bush, there are special places around us where we can see nature! Let's go for a nature walk to explore the nature near us.

Plan

Look at the weather forecast and have a look around for the perfect place for a nature walk. Use the **Finding Nature Near Us!** activity sheet to plan your outdoor activities and collect loose parts for a Nature Artwork.

Take action

What lies outside your door or window? Loose parts are natural materials like leaves, twigs, stones that can be used to make an outdoor **Nature Artwork!**

You could create a mandala, a landscape, an animal portrait or a self portrait.

Key words

Nature, bush, habitat, weather, sit spot, environment, loose parts.



Monitor

Take a walk around the playground to see everyone's nature artworks! See how long it takes for the wind to blow your artwork away. What special treasures did you find on the walk for your nature artwork?

Celebrate

In a circle time, have students reflect on their learning. How do we feel when we find a special place in nature? How do you feel when you look at the sky and the clouds? If anyone felt uncomfortable on the nature walk, what could we do next time to help them feel more at ease?

Finding Nature Near Us!



Use our senses, connect to our environment and move our bodies on a Nature Walk!

Whether we live in the city or the bush, there are special places around us where we can see nature. Let's go for a nature walk to explore the nature near us. We'll learn how to gather loose parts as we go!

Before you begin...

Choose a safe route for a nature walk. Walking the route before guiding children there is essential. Look for some good areas for children to sit and observe along the way. We call these 'Sit Spots'. Ensure appropriate clothing is worn, sun protection is considered, and children are hydrated. Always bring your First Aid kit on walks. If the children find something special that is not appropriate to collect, take a picture to share later!

You'll need

- Sunscreen
- Hat
- Enclosed shoes
- Basket or egg carton for collecting loose parts
- First Aid Kit



Optional:

- Binoculars
- Camera

1. Circle Time

Start with a circle time in the outdoors. Take time to Acknowledge Country.

- *Today we are going to practice using our senses to explore nature. What kind of a space is our childcare in? What is around us? Trees? Buildings?*
- *How does the weather feel today? Let's put on our **owl eyes** to look at the sky, can we see any clouds? Is it warm or cold? Can we feel any wind blowing? Is it bright or grey?*
- *Let's put on our **dingo ears** to listen for what we can hear. Can we hear any people noises? Machines? Animals?*
- *We are going on a walk together and we will use our **owl eyes**, and our **dingo ears** to notice as much as we can. Do you think we might see any animals? We might see big animals (like a dog) or tiny creatures, like insects! Lastly, let's agree on the safety rules for our walk.*

2. Nature Walk

- Take your group to a safe Sit Spot and expect to stay there for 5 - 10 minutes. Each child should focus on what they can see, hear, smell, and how they feel in the space. If you have binoculars, children can take turns using them. Let children know when there is one more minute left in the Sit Spot. Before moving on, ask if anyone wants to share what their favourite sight, sound or smell was?

3. Animal Survey

- In a Sit Spot, or on your walk, keep a counting tally of the animals you see and hear e.g. snails, birds etc. on a sheet of paper. Ask the children to help you keep count by using their fingers. Take time to stop and watch some living creatures. Children can try moving their bodies the same way the animals do.

4. Find a Treasure

- Loose parts are natural items found on the ground. Make sure you only collect materials that have fallen to the ground and are no longer being used by the plant. If the plant has dropped it (and it is safe to do so) you may pick it up.
- Find a good collecting location and give the children clear boundaries around where they can go and how long you will be stopping to Find a Treasure e.g. rocks, sticks, leaves, seed pods, bark and any other natural treasures. Explain how to safely collect loose parts in their basket or egg carton.
- It helps to give the children a 2-minute warning before leaving the collection spot.

5. Reflection

- At the conclusion of the walk, or soon thereafter, take time to reflect. How do we feel when we find a special place in nature? How do you feel when you look at the sky and the clouds? What special treasures did you find on the walk? If anyone felt uncomfortable on the nature walk, what could we do next time to help them feel more at ease?