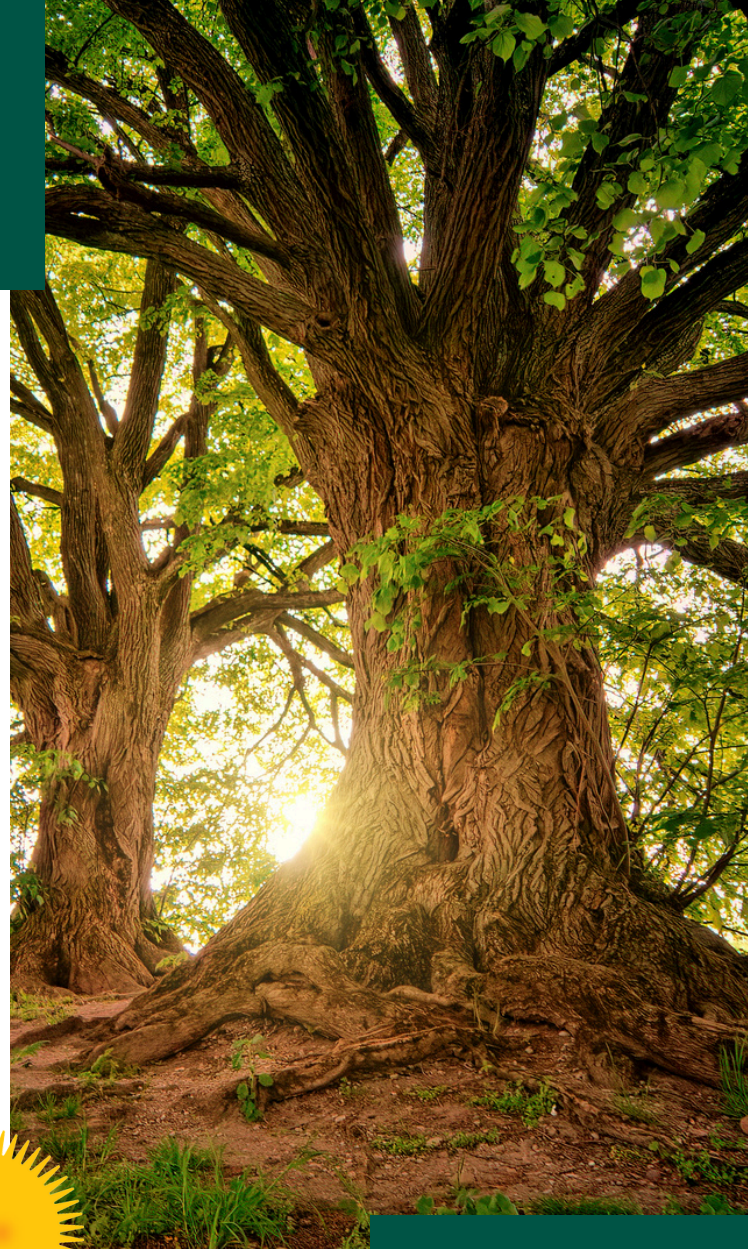


Nature Play

Playing with natural resources provides many benefits for children in the early years, including getting outside and exploring their local environment and community, learning about the local wildlife and concepts such as life cycles, seasons, and how these impacts on our natural resources and the importance of sustainability.

This resource is designed for parents and carers and provides simple, no or low-cost activities to engage children in learning about nature. When children engage in nature play, they:

- use all 5 senses when exploring
- develop their fine and gross motor skills and physical strength
- improve their emotional regulation
- develop their imagination
- build confidence
- develop decision-making skills



In this resource, you will find examples of safe and developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor nature-play based experiences for children and their caregivers to experience together.

Start by taking a walk around your local area and gathering some natural resources such as:

- fallen leaves
- pebbles
- sticks
- pine cones or gumnuts
- feathers
- sand or different coloured soil
- flowers
- seed pods
- and other natural items that you find along the way

Ideas to get you started

Nature Art

Make a picture using the natural resources you have gathered in your local community. You can adapt this activity to suit your child's interests and age. You may choose to make a picture, a pattern or place things randomly. Encourage your child's efforts and show interest in their creations. Allow children to experiment.



Stacked stones

If you live in an area with lots of stones (or you can hunt for them in the garden) you can use the stones as building blocks, and they are a great resource for learning number and math concepts. How high can you stack stones? If you put them end to end, how long are they?



Create a fairy garden

Use the resources you have found to create a fairy garden using an old plant pot, a plate or even a teapot. You can then add rocks, leaves, grass and plants to make your fairy garden. Perhaps you make a village! Then you can make up a story about the fairy who lives there and the adventures they have.



Mud painting

If you have access to soil or dirt, you can mix in a small amount of water then use it to paint outside. Try experimenting with different types of dirt. You can paint on paper, concrete or a paver and use sticks or fingers for paintbrushes. When your finished you can wash it away!



Build a stick hut or a nest

If you find lots of sticks, you could build a stick hut or a nest together. This is an opportunity to talk to children about balance and measurement as well as practice gross and fine motor skills. You can use items from nature to decorate your structure and support imaginative play.

