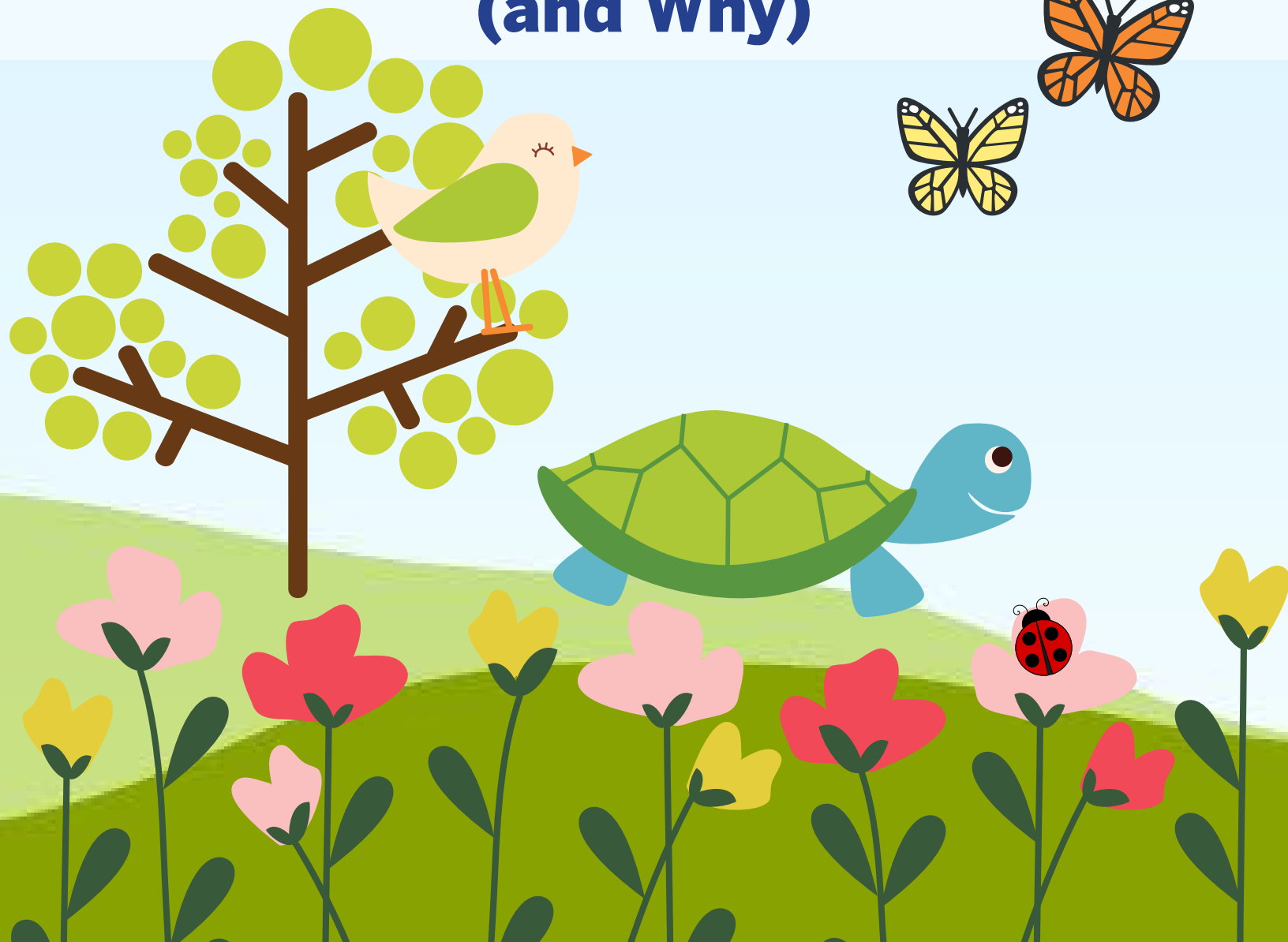
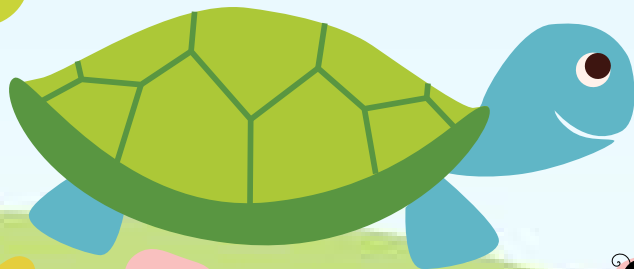


Audubon Naturalist Society

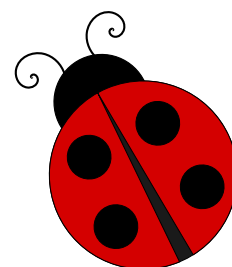
Parent Guide: How to Help Children Fall in Love with Nature (and Why)





Introduction

- Did you ever consider that a **rainy day** might be perfect for a walk in the woods?
- Did you ever pick up a fallen tree branch and call it a **hammer**?
- Did you ever bang sticks against tree trunks to make **music**?



The children we know and have the pleasure to instruct and guide have done all of this and more as they fell in love with nature and learned to become better protectors of the environment!

And we imagine that yours will too!

ANS is home to the Washington, D.C. metro region's experts on connecting people to nature, and we're especially wild about connecting children to the environment. We know that children grow better outdoors. Scientists tell us that more time outdoors is the gift that pays them back for a lifetime with more happiness, creativity, resilience, academic prowess, physical strength and ability, and more!

So, when we were thinking about how to help families in the DC metro region get the most out of our year-round experiences with children and nature, we turned to our environmental and education experts. And they responded with 11 magical "recipes" to help children fall in love with nature and help parents convert screen time to green time.

These outdoor activities are designed for children 8 and younger and contain the finest ingredients for nature play.

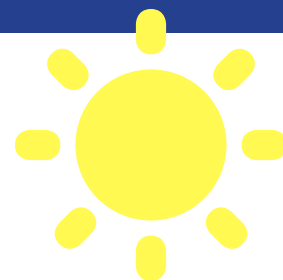
So, go ahead. Let your youngsters be the master chefs of their environment! As your children's sous chef, you can provide the raw materials they need to create natural wonders. One tip before you head outdoors, stock up on environmentally-friendly bug spray and sunblock, and cool pants and tops with long sleeves.



Why You Should Help Children Fall in Love with Nature

General Benefits of Outdoor Play

When children work together to build a fort with fallen branches, they are not doing it because it's good for them. They are not thinking about the calories they are burning or the skills they are gaining. When the fort collapses and they rebuild it, they are not doing it to ward off depression, hyperactivity or stress. They are having fun! But in recent years, this type of fun has largely been replaced by television, video games, structured activities, and classes. Experts say our children are suffering. They're struggling with obesity, attention deficit disorders, behavior problems and underdeveloped social skills. Many scientific studies show that outdoor play has important benefits beyond enjoyment of the moment. The positive impact of that fort built with sticks will last long after the fort has crumbled into a distant memory.

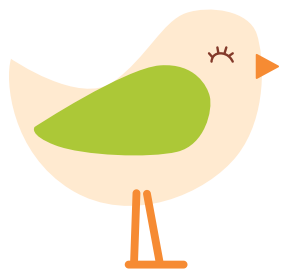


Physical Benefits

Exposure to sunlight and Vitamin D strengthens the immune system, strengthens bones and muscles, and enhances mood. Physical activity improves balance, coordination, fine motor skills and gross motor skills. More time spent outdoors is related to reduced rates of nearsightedness, also known as myopia, in children and adolescents (American Academy of Ophthalmology, 2011). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report childhood obesity rates have more than doubled since 1980. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends outdoor play time as a key component to solving the obesity epidemic.

Social Benefits

Group activities teach teamwork, cooperation, negotiation, conflict resolution, and sharing. Outdoor play also helps young children learn new skills and overcome challenges, which increases self-confidence, resiliency and the ability to lead. Those qualities promote healthy social interactions which have been directly linked to future success in the workplace. According to the Journal of American Medicine, "Children will be smarter, better able to get along with others, healthier and happier when they have regular opportunities for free and unstructured play in the out-of-doors."



Mental and Emotional Benefits

Time spent outdoors can increase creativity, curiosity, happiness, independence, resilience, and the ability to problem-solve. These skills have been found to increase academic performance in school. Students in outdoor science programs improved their science testing scores by 27% (American Institutes for Research, 2005). Studies have found outdoor time helps reduce childhood stress and anxiety. It also teaches young children to assess risk. The American Academy of Pediatrics argues, "For all children, this setting (outdoors) allows for the full blossoming of creativity, curiosity, and the associated developmental advances."



Discover more about the benefits at these links!

- **No Child Left Inside: Reconnecting Kids with the Outdoors**

<https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/federal-advocacy/Documents/NoChildLeftInside-ReconnectingKidswiththeOutdoors.pdf>

- **Benefits of Connecting Children to Nature**

https://naturalearning.org/sites/default/files/Benefits%20of%20Connecting%20Children%20with%20Nature_InfoSheet.pdf

- **The Benefits of Outdoor Play for Children**

<https://www.livestrong.com/article/141891-the-benefits-outdoor-play-children/>

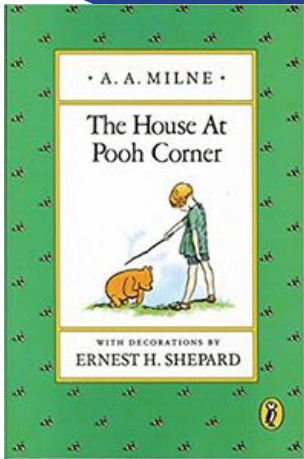
- **Resurrecting Free Play in Young Children**

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/485902>



A Recipe for Fun!

PLAYING "POOHSTICKS" BY A CREEK



Ingredients

- The House at Pooh Corner by A. A. Milne. "Chapter Six: in which Pooh invents a new game and Eeyore joins in"

[Click to read Chapter Six online](#)

[Listen to Chapter Six online](#)

- Any creek (preferably with a bridge over it), for example, in Rock Creek Park, or Willard Avenue Neighborhood Park at 4915 River Road, Bethesda, MD

- Sticks of all sizes



- Clothes that can get muddy and a little wet, including water shoes, boots or old sneakers



"Children are drawn to the water. Hardly any child gets bored when there is moving water nearby and opportunities for conversations and cooperative play abound."

JULIE WALKUP

FOREST KINDERGARTEN TEACHER



Directions

To learn how to play Poohsticks, read the story at home or bring it along and read it at the creek.

Take a walk to the creek, find a bridge, and have your child determine which way the current is flowing.

Collect sticks of different sizes.

Throw sticks off one side of the bridge and go to the other side and delight in watching them come out from underneath.

Consider having races!

Try floating bark and leaf boats as well.

Watch where these natural materials go as they float down the creek and imagine where they might travel when out of sight.

A Recipe for Fun!

BUILDING BRIDGES AND DAMS



Directions

Find some water and follow your child's lead!

Changing the flow of water is endlessly fascinating for young children.

Where

MD: Audubon Naturalist Society or Sligo Creek

DC: Any picnic area in Rock Creek Park

VA: Scott's Run

Your own backyard: Put play sand in an under-bed container and add water.

Ingredients

- Water
- Sand, sticks, mud, rocks, wood chips, pebbles, and logs (as much of the solid materials as you can find!)



"There is such deep learning happening while children are connecting with the earth, such as: Physics (Why does the water flow more quickly in some areas?); Geometry (How will I fill the space with different shapes to block the water?); Spatial relationships (Which rocks balance best on one another?); Chemistry (How much water should I add to this soil to make perfect packing mud?); Communication (Let's put the logs there!); Social learning (How will we work together?). The list goes on and includes skills proven to be most important for future success: problem-solving, grit, and endurance."

STEPHANIE BOZZO

ANS PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR



WATCH THE VIDEO TO LEARN
MORE ABOUT ANS NATURE PRESCHOOL



A Recipe for Fun!

TRACKING ANIMALS

Ingredients

- Magnifying glass
- Ruler
- Guide book (Big Tracks, Little Tracks and Tracks, Scats and Signs)
- Dress for the weather! (In the snow be sure to have boots and waterproof mittens, as well as rain boots and pants for days of muddy fun!)

Directions

After it has rained (or snowed) is a perfect time for tracking! Mud and snow are just right for capturing animal footprints and movements throughout the night.

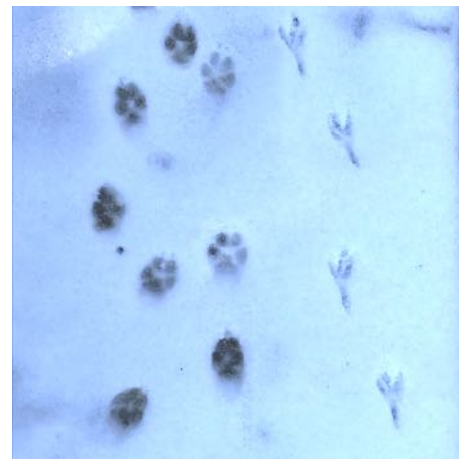
Where

DC: Creek beds in Rock Creek Park

MD: Audubon Naturalist Society pond or Sligo Creek

VA: Huntley Meadows

Adaptation: Put flour on a smooth surface in your own backyard and check in the morning for tracks!



“Postulating what animals have been doing while we were sleeping is my go-to question anytime I hit the trails. Uncovering clues to the animal’s nighttime movement inherently leads to questions of who, what, where, when and why. Looking for tracks, scat, and any left-over snacks can be pieced together to create narratives about our nighttime friends through meaningful, child-led, hands-on learning.”

AMELIA MCLAUGHLIN

ANS PRESCHOOL TEACHER

A Recipe for Fun!

DISSECTING FLOWERS

Ingredients

- Three flowers
- Magnifying lens (optional)
- Paper, pencils or crayons
- Scissors for cutting the flowers (optional)

Where

For purchase at a grocery store or flower shop.

Adaptation: Follow the same steps for insect or leaf observation.



"Asking children to look closely at flowers, and even allowing them to take them apart, helps them discover that each flower has several similar parts."

JENNY BROWN

ANS SCHOOL GARDEN MANAGER



Directions

Have your children pick three different blossoms. You can also do this by purchasing a bouquet of a variety of flowers.

When back home, provide paper and pencils or crayons and draw the flowers.

Then, have a conversation about the many ways the flowers are similar and different.

Encourage everyone to use their eyes to inspect closely, noses to smell them, fingers and hands to touch them and even take them apart to see inside.





A Recipe for Fun!

SENSORY EXPLORATION

Ingredients

- Bug box with magnifier or handheld magnifying lens
- Hula hoop

Where

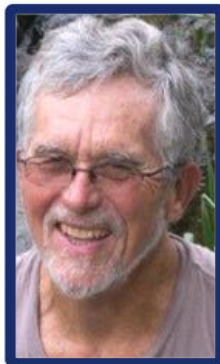
Any outdoor space.

Directions

Buy a cheap hand lens or bug box with a magnifier to enjoy small creatures or parts of plants.

Instill the concept of not harming the natural world, but, at times, removing one leaf to enjoy its fragrance or to investigate can be a fun learning experience.

Try using a hula hoop to set boundaries for a backyard, large grassy area, or meadow exploration. Challenge your children to see how many different kinds of plants and animals they might find. This helps reinforce the idea of focusing.



**FRANK
SANFORD**

MASTER NATURALIST & EDUCATOR

“In our hectic, fast-paced world, we tend to overlook the little things in nature that can be endless hours of fascination for young kids. I always tell kids that animals do a much better job of exploring their habitat than we do, so we need to use our eyes, ears, noses, and our sense of touch to capture nature's treasures. I also emphasize that humans tend to look straight ahead when in the wild - rather than looking up, down, and to both sides.”



A Recipe for Fun!

ROLLING LOGS



Ingredients

- Logs!
- Optional:
 - Magnifying glasses
 - Bug catchers
 - Field guide to bugs and insects

Directions

Find a log- any log, large or small.

Grab the front of the log and roll toward you to uncover what is underneath!

Closely observe what is underneath. Look quickly (some bugs are fast-moving and will quickly scurry beneath the dirt!) or for a while afterward (others take a while to spy, such as tiny slug eggs or a camouflaged toad).

After you've observed and touched all that you want to see, carefully replace the critters' "roof" by rolling the log back where it started.



"Every log becomes a treasure trove that is just waiting to be explored; one that drives us to ask, 'What will I find next?' and reminds us of the excitement that can be found all around us! Children exercise their fine motor skills as they gently pick these critters out from the mud, and are eager to share these finds with the people around them."

CHELSEA HAWK

ANS PRESCHOOL TEACHER

Where

Any wooded area! It can be a familiar area, in which children can return throughout the seasons and in various types of weather, or it could be on any walk or hike where there are fallen logs.

Rock Creek Park, Sligo Creek Park, ANS's Woodend Sanctuary, or even your own backyard can all be wonderful places to find and roll logs.

A Recipe for Fun!

STICK FORT-BUILDING

Ingredients

- Sticks of all sizes, especially “Y” sticks (larger branches with a forked Y at the end that can support another branch in-between), twine, stumps, rocks, and bark for furnishing
- Wear long pants to protect against thorns and poison ivy when scavenging for sticks. Remind children about stick safety - watch out for other children nearby, and drag long sticks with one end on the ground (or better yet, work as a team!)

Where

Any slightly wild area, preferably one that your children can return to again and again. The woody edges of public parks are great, or just your backyard. Woodend Sanctuary is full of children’s forts, and I’ve seen forts in Rock Creek, Sligo Creek and under bushes at public playgrounds.

Adaptation: Build a fort between two fallen logs by stacking sticks in a row as a roof. Use the hole made by a fallen tree’s root mass as a subterranean room. Create a den under a forsythia or other bush.



"When children build a fort themselves, they gain a strong sense of ownership and pride. There is so much creativity, spatial reasoning, and problem-solving that go into fort-building.

SHANNON EARLE

FOREST KINDERGARTEN TEACHER



Directions

Find some tall “Y” sticks. These are key to building the stable central part of a teepee-like structure. You can use a small tree with a forked trunk as the main support, and lean the larger branches against it in a cone. Younger children will need help with this part.

Children of all ages can collect straight branches and sticks to lean against and across the main supports.

Tying branches together with twine is optional, but a lot of fun. Twine can also be used to hang items inside the fort.

Furnish your fort with small stumps or rocks for seats and tables, bark pieces for plates, and leaves or nuts for pretend food.

Once you have built your fort, it’s time for play!

Garnish with shared stories, pretend play and a long-lasting connection to a little patch of wild.



A Recipe for Fun!

A SHAPE & PATTERN HIKE



Ingredients

- Paper or notebook, pen, pencil, or crayon
(This activity could take place with an electronic device, but we hope you'll understand if we encourage you to stick with paper)
- Proper clothing for woodsy areas and meadows, and for the temperatures you'll encounter during your hike

Where

Your neighborhood, forest or wooded areas, meadows, parks, gardens, farms (Check out our Favorite Nature Spaces Guide for more ideas!)



**NORA
KELLY**

ANS CAMP DIRECTOR

"Nature offers children – and adults – limitless ways to playfully explore the great outdoors. What I love about the color and shape hikes is that they make us pay attention to what's so wonderful and unique about plants and wildlife. They make us take closer looks, and when we do, we're rewarded with pleasant surprises. Not to mention new knowledge in science, math, art, and even language!"

Directions

Before you head out, make a list of as many shapes (such as square, circle, and triangle) and patterns (such as striped, wave, and spiral) as you can think of. Feel free to use the Internet to help grow your list.

Leave some space next to each shape or pattern on your list so you can write the name of the item you find or draw an image.

You might even take photos and make a book of nature's geometry found during your nature hike.

Head out to an area where you're sure to find plants and wildlife in a large variety of shapes and patterns – everything from squirrels to birds to fruit trees and flowers in neighborhood gardens and gardens grown by nature sanctuaries and parks – will provide you with a small dictionary of patterns and shapes.

Just as is the case with finding colors and shades, some flowers, trees, and birds could provide several shapes and patterns. So walk with your eyes open wide and be prepared to document nature's geometry on your hike.

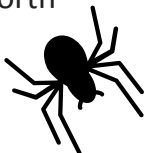
A Recipe for Fun!

CATCHING INSECTS



Ingredients

- Grasses or small plants
- Transparent containers
- Bug net
- Light colored clothing
- Long pants and sleeves
- Optional:
 - Bug viewer (available at ANS shop)
 - Insect guide book (National Audubon Society Field Guide to Insects and Spiders of North America)
 - iNaturalist app



Directions

Head to your nearest meadow on a sunny morning, bring a net and a couple of jars to catch insects.

A meadow is the perfect habitat for insects. They have a bit of shelter by the leaves, the morning dew provides water, plants and smaller animals serve as food, and there is always plenty of space for tiny things!

If you keep in mind the insects' needs, you will always find something - especially at the places where they eat.

Are you curious about colorful butterflies fluttering around? Look for fresh flowers and stay very still. In no time, the sweet floral aroma will attract butterflies and hover flies, and some spiders, too. Why spiders, you might ask? Well, the spiders, just like you, know that flying insects are passing by, so they hide, and wait for the chance to feast.

If you want to find beetles, look under the leaves! They are always roaming around looking for the next meal. Lady beetles especially will seek buggy plants.

Once you have collected a handful of creatures, you can use an Insect ID guide or the iNaturalist app on your smartphone to help you get an idea of what you are looking at.



**SERENELLA
LINARES**

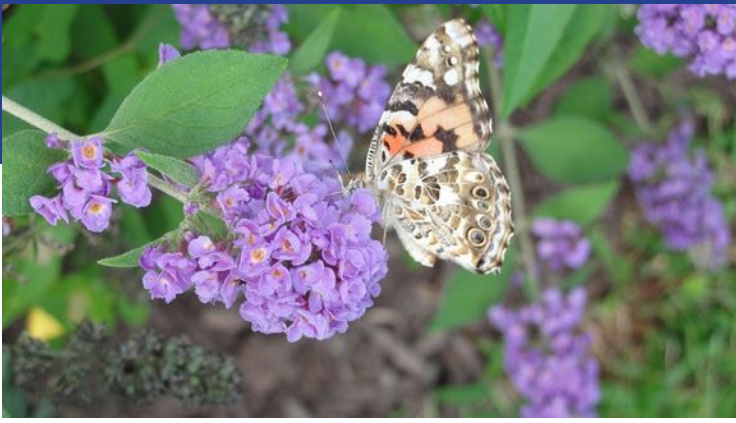
**SCHOOL
PROGRAMS
MANAGER**

"Learning about small creatures can be a beautiful experience for parents and kids alike. Don't worry if you can't identify everything you collect. The experience of catching and observing is what truly matters. Enjoy the summer!"



Where

A place with grasses. Audubon Naturalist Society's Woodend Sanctuary has two big meadows ready to be explored! Rock Creek Park, (Nature Center entrance off Military Road, and off Jones Mill Road entrance. Park in the main parking lot, next to the mansion, walk toward Jones Mill Road, meadow is on the right). [Or your backyard.](#)



A Recipe for Fun!

A COLOR & SHADE HIKE

Directions

Before you head out, make a list of as many colors and shades as you can think of. You might even grab a box of 24, 48, or 64 crayons to help grow your list.

Leave some space next to each color or shade on your list so you can write the name of the item you find or draw an image. You might even take photos and make a book of colors and shades found during your nature hike.

Head out to an area where you're sure to find plants and wildlife in a large variety of colors – everything from squirrels to birds to fruit trees and flowers in neighborhood gardens and gardens grown by nature sanctuaries and parks – will provide you a rainbow of colors.

Some flowers, trees, and birds, of course, might provide a slice of the rainbow all by themselves. So walk with your eyes open wide and be prepared to document nature's rainbow on your hike.



Where

Your neighborhood, forest or wooded areas, meadows, parks, gardens, farms (Check out our Favorite Nature Spaces Guide for more ideas!)



Ingredients

- Paper or notebook, pen, pencil, or crayon (This activity could take place with an electronic device, but we hope you'll understand if we encourage you to stick with paper)
- Proper clothing for woodsy areas and meadows, and for the temperatures you'll encounter during your hike



A Recipe for Fun!

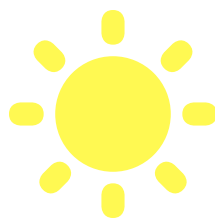
GROWING HERBS

Ingredients

- Bunch of scallions, hydroponic basil, sprigs of mint
- Potting soil or yard soil
- Vegetable or fruit containers from the store or a flower pot (drainage holes are what is needed)
- Tray or dish to catch the water going through
- Sunlit window ledge or sunny section of the yard
- A jar or glass
- Water

Where

This can be in the ground or in pots on a balcony or on the ledge over your kitchen sink, especially if it gets several hours of sun each day. Three to four hours of sunlight is ideal.



"I often tell my students that tending plants is about as much work as brushing your teeth every day. It doesn't take long but needs to be done regularly for best results. And the plants will reward you with the delicious smells and tastes of mint, basil and onion."

JENNY BROWN

ANS SCHOOL GARDEN MANAGER



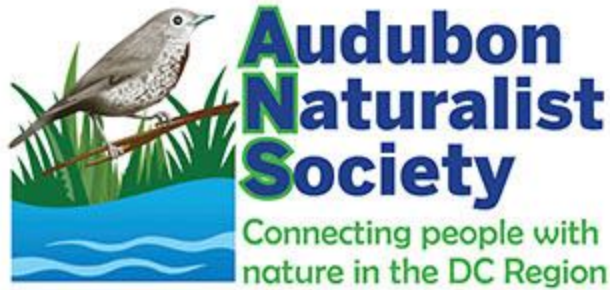
Directions

Buy basil that has its roots still attached. After using the leaves, put the root ball in a pot full of potting soil or in a garden area. The pot will need to have drainage holes. The plastic boxes that grocery store fruit comes in work just fine. You will need to put a dish under to keep the water from draining out.

You can also grow your own scallions with the root ends. Just pop them in some soil after cutting them from the part you will be eating.

A third easy herb to grow is mint. Put the cut end of one sprig or more into a glass of water. Within a week, you will see roots sprouting and can then put them into a pot of soil. If you are planting these three plants outside, deer and rabbits won't bother them. And if you want to see what earthworms do for plants, try making up two pots of herbs but put some earthworms in one. After a few weeks, you will notice that one plant is much healthier!

Of course, all plants need a steady supply of water and sun. If in pots, they will also need some organic fertilizer every few months.



Contact Us

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDREN IN NATURE,
FAVORITE ACTIVITIES, OR THE ANS TEACHERS WHO SUBMITTED THEM,
PLEASE CONTACT US.

Diane Lill
ANS Environmental Education Director
Diane.Lill@anshome.org

Stephanie Bozzo
ANS Preschool Director
Stephanie.Bozzo@anshome.org

Nora Kelly
ANS Camp Director
Nora.Kelly@anshome.org

Caroline Brewer
ANS Communications and Marketing Director
Editor of the Parent Guide
Caroline.Brewer@anshome.org

General Information
www.anshome.org

Click Education tab for details on Environmental Education programs.

www.facebook.com/audubonnaturalistsociety
www.twitter.com/ANStweets
www.instagram.com/ANSnature

Email: Contact@anshome.org
Phone: (301) 652-9188

Favorite Nature Spaces Guide

CARDEROCK, MD

Spring wildflowers in the Washington area are dazzling! Identify wildflowers and look for Virginia bluebells, Dutchman's breeches, twinleaf, toad trillium, and many other species.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

MONOCACY AQUEDUCT, MD

A stroll through an early spring woods can be magical, with both the colors and forms of unfolding leaves and stems catching the eye. In bottomland woods, there's the added delight of spring wildflowers underfoot.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

HUNTLEY MEADOWS, VA

Immerse yourself in the phenomenon of spring migration with this series of short bird walks at nearby parks.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

BLACK HILL HIKER/BIKER TRAIL, MD

The early bird may get the worm, but late afternoon can be a rewarding time to birdwatch as well.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

GREAT FALLS, MD

Search for spring wildflowers, blooming trees, and early spring wildlife activity, including birds, butterflies, and amphibians. The natural surface river trail is mostly level but could be muddy.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

RUST NATURE SANCTUARY, VA

Enjoy an equal mix of pristine nature and local history at Rust Sanctuary in Leesburg, Virginia. Walk 68 acres of wooded trails through unspoiled meadows and forests in the nature sanctuary.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

BILLY GOAT TRAIL, MD

Billy Goat Trail, along the Potomac River in Maryland below Great Falls, is popular for both outdoor exercise and natural history. Landslides under an ancient sea, an ocean floor caught between colliding continents, floodplains from previous versions of the Potomac--all are visible in the rock exposures and sediment near Carderock Recreation Area, just outside the Beltway.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

VIOLETES LOCK, MD

They're lovely to behold. But their beauty belies the scrappy, survival strategies of our region's short-lived spring wildflowers. Coping with cold temperatures, species such as Trout Lily and Dutchman's Breeches race to complete their flowering and fruiting cycles before the brief window of spring sunlight gets shut out by the unfolding forest canopy.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

WIDEWATER, MD

Observe birds, wildflowers, butterflies, snakes, turtles, and whatever else!

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)



Favorite Nature Spaces Guide

BLUE MASH, MD

Immerse yourself in the phenomenon of spring migration with this walk, searching for both resident and migrant birds by song and sound.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

RIVERBEND PARK, VA

The display of spring wildflowers is remarkably rich in the varied habitats along the Potomac River close-in to our metro-area. From moist bottomlands to rocky, forested uplands, the woods in May beckon with blooms underfoot and spring-green leaves overhead.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

PENNYFIELD LOCK, MD

More than 30 species of warblers pass through the mid-Atlantic during spring migration—but finding and properly identifying these active songbirds can be a real challenge

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

SWAIN'S LOCK, MD

Spring has sprung and the towpath along the Potomac River is one of the finest places in the DC-metro area to experience the season's richness. Look for spring wildflowers, butterflies and other insects, and reptiles and amphibians, all the while keeping an eye and ear open for spring migrants and other breeding bird activity.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

MCKEE-BESHERS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA, MD

Aim for hearing six or seven different frog species.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

THEODORE ROOSEVELT ISLAND, DC

Theodore Roosevelt Island is a showcase of geology, befitting the energetic environmentalist whom it honors. Ancient Piedmont bedrock exposures occur at the northern end, while modern Coastal Plain deposits form the eastern and southern portions. Surrounded by the Potomac River, the island features natural levees and backswamps (like the Mississippi), a tidal inlet and marsh (like Chincoteague), and garnet-bearing rocks (like the Blue Ridge). All within walking distance of the

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

LITTLE BENNETT PARK, MD

Little Bennett Regional Park near Clarksburg, MD, is a park where you can still get lost. Its richness in plant diversity is due to its many habitats, including mature forest, shrub thicket, meadow, wetland and floodplain forest.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

PATUXENT RESEARCH AREA/NORTH TRACT, MD

Look for dragonfly and damselfly species.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)



Favorite Nature Spaces Guide

SCOTT'S RUN, VA

Scotts Run Nature preserve is a 336-acre tract of Virginia woods, ravines, and palisades just upstream from the American Legion Bridge. The landscape varies from rolling upland and a narrow stream valley to rocky cliffs and riverine floodplain. The bedrock was formed in an ocean that was extinguished during the assembly of the super-continent Pangea.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

JUG BAY NATURAL AREA OF PATUXENT RIVER PARK, MD

Explore woods and marshes to search out both common and uncommon breeders of this wetland habitat.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

ELLIOTT ISLAND, MD

Extensive wetlands border the Chesapeake Bay on Maryland's Eastern Shore, and the marshes near Vienna, MD are diverse, well-studied, and accessible. Identify marsh plants and search for birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. Continue into the night to listen for rails, frogs, owls, and Chuck-will's-widows.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK, MD

Search for butterflies, caterpillars and host plants.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN, MD

Enjoy the botany, wildlife, geology, and history of our local monadnock in the rural Piedmont northwest of Washington, D.C. The 1.5-mile hike is timed to coincide with High Spring's greening of the Sugarloaf Mountain woodlands and many plants, including mountain laurel and fringe-tree. Bring binoculars to look for Wood Thrushes, Warblers, Ravens, and other bird species.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

FINZEL SWAMP, MD

Finzel Swamp is a boreal relict that straddles Allegany and Garrett counties just west of Frostburg in western Maryland. Retreating glaciers 15,000 years ago left behind a flora and fauna preserved in a "frost pocket" – a special arrangement of soil, water, and topography that preserves the cool conditions of the late Ice Age. Several early summer butterfly specialties of Finzel are hard to find anywhere else in Maryland and are more reminiscent of habitats hundreds of miles to the north. These include Harris's Checkerspot and Silver-bordered Fritillary. Long Dash and Essex (European) skippers are also possible finds at this season, as well as Baltimore Checkerspots and Gray Comma. In addition to butterflies, the area is also known for its unique botanic and birdlife diversity.

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Favorite Nature Spaces Guide

WEST VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS, WV

Highlights could include birds, wildflowers, salamanders, butterflies, and the ambiance of scenic Appalachian landscapes.

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SUITLAND BOG, MD

Suitland Bog is a tiny Coastal Plain “magnolia bog,” the best preserved of over 30 bogs that once occurred in the Beltsville-Suitland (MD) area. Happily, it was preserved from development in the 1970's after much of the surrounding area was mined for sand and gravel. Technically not a bog but a fen, this unique gem provides a home to the carnivorous pitcher-plant as well as other unusual plants in a 60-acre protected area inside the Beltway.

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PATUXENT RIVER, MD

Enjoy river tours from the Riverkeeper's headquarters at 17412 Nottingham Road; Upper Marlboro, MD 20772. The Patuxent is a fantastic paddling environment.

[SEE MORE ONLINE](#)

WOODEND SANCTUARY, MD

Sticky summer has arrived and the songs of insects such as cicadas, crickets, and katydids begin to swell into a noisy and riotous chorus. Come visit our 40-acre nature sanctuary and headquarters in Chevy Chase, MD. Check anshome.org for activities and events.

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U.S. ARBORETUM, DC

Ramble through the Fern Valley native plant garden in the US National Arboretum to learn more about these ancient and beautiful plants

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KENILWORTH PARK AND AQUATIC GARDENS, DC

Kenilworth Park & Aquatic Gardens is a National Park Service site located in the northeastern corner of Washington, D.C., and the Maryland state border. The park and gardens preserve a wide variety of rare waterlilies and lotuses, along with the Kenilworth Marsh, the only remaining tidal marsh in Washington, D.C.

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