



Getting Outside with Kids

For Rainy Days:

- Go on Safari – plenty of animals enjoy the rain. Have you ever noticed how many worms surface after a drizzly night? Or how many birds are still flitting about, shaking off their wings on the roadside branches? Can you spot any hopping frogs or toads?
Insects are especially interesting to look for. Keep your eyes open for slugs and snails, and carefully poke around the backyard. Are there bugs hiding under the stones lining the garden beds? Are there any flying insects sheltering under broad leaves, waiting for the shower to pass?
- Get Artsy – Take some chalk outside and see how vibrant the water makes the colors and how they run together more smoothly!
Find fallen leaves and petals, and try some Andy Goldsworthy-style artwork! The water will help things lay flat and stick together. How does your piece change as the rain stops and the materials dry?
- Get Muddy – Well....why not?! Grab some old towels for when you come back inside, and head out into the mud and grass! Make some mud pies, make a mud angel (you only live once!), build a mud and stick castle, and jump in every puddle you can find.

- Plant Some Seeds – What better time to plant some seeds than when the soil is damp and soft, and the rain will water them for you? Visit the [Resilient Roots blog](#) to read about what to plant now, and if you're really in the gardening mood what you can start inside.

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- Can you find your state flower?
  - The mayflower is a plant, as well as a famous ship that brought colonists to America! Go to your favorite woods and look closely at the ground for small green leaves an inch or two long that lie flat on the ground. This time of year they are blooming with pink and white flowers that smell delicious if you feel comfortable putting your nose up close! At first, you might confuse the mayflower with the wintergreen plant, which you'll see all over the floor of the piney woods. Their lives are similar in size but they grow up an inch or so off the ground and you might see a bright red berry under some of the leaves. If you pinch the wintergreen leaf and smell it, you'll know the minty scent of wintergreen. The mayflower, also known as trailing arbutus, is the state flower of Massachusetts.
- Grab a basket, a blanket and some books and head outside to read them together!
- Paint Nature's Shadows! Grab some paper and paint, colored pencils or crayons and find a spot to sit where the shadow of a tree, some leaves or a flower falls over your paper. Now draw away!
  - Next Level: can you use color to emulate the colors of the plant you're shadow painting? What medium makes the prettiest looking shadows?

- Are You a Cartographer? Make a map of your yard, and include special landmarks like your favorite tree or the stone covered in neat mosses!
  - Next Level: can you map your neighborhood? What about your favorite walking route?!
- Can You Hear the Birds? Now is a great time to listen to bird calls and see if you can identify which birds are making them. Check out [the Merlin Bird App](#) to help with bird identification – our volunteer Holly gives it two thumbs up!
  - Next Level: Add a section on bird identification to your nature journal! Write about what calls they make, which trees they like to sing from, and what time of day you see them.
- Do You Want to Build a Fairy House? Find a neat little nook at the base of a tree, or a nook in a stone wall, and build a fairy house using found materials! From acorn caps as cups and pretty bark as a decorative door, the creative possibilities have no end! [Use this guide](#) to help you get started.
- How Tall is Your Leaf Pile? Challenge children to make the tallest leaf or stick pile in the yard (and maybe get a little yard work done at the same time!).
  - Next Level: can you identify which trees these branches came from? It's not always easy with no leaves to make the case for you!
- Got Playdoh? Discover textures in nature. Compare the imprint of different trees.
  - Next Level: identify the trees and start a nature journal with your findings.

- Beach cleanup. Do your part and help clean up our community.
  - Next Level: Categorize what you have found in your nature journal. What can be recycled? Composted? Put in the garage?
  
- What's the weather today? Create a weather wheel. Draw or print out different types of weather and put them in a circular pattern. Use a paper clip or laundry clips to mark the days weather.
  - Next Level: Be more specific. Record the temperature, humidity, percent rain or sun and log it all into a nature journal.
  
- Storming outside? Head to the beach! Watch the storm roll in over the water from the safety of your vehicle.
  - Next Level: Record differences in the waves, wind and animal activities in your nature journal.
  
- Do you speak bird? No? Then here is your chance. Download a birding app and start identifying what's in your back yard. Learn their songs, colors, and characteristics.
  - Next Level: Add a birding section to your nature journal. Try to draw the bird and describe its outstanding features.
  
- Got Rocks? Create a mandala. Place the rocks in artistic circular patterns. This can be done in your backyard or with the rocks at Sandy Neck. Take pictures and share with family and friends.
  - Next Level: Read into the origin of a mandala. Add the information to your nature journal.

- Got seeds? Plant a garden! Spring is here and many plants are ready to be put in the soil. Take a few seed packets into the yard and create a family garden.
  - Next Level: start a garden section in your nature journal! Record what pops up first, what shape the seedling leaves take, and how they change day to day.
  
- I spy! Create a scavenger hunt in the neighborhood or at your favorite conservation area and get finding!
  - Next Level: have the kids create a scavenger hunt for you, or for each other! What interesting objects will they discover that you might not have?