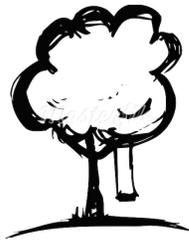


Build a Fort

In your Backyard or Neighborhood



- Find materials to create a fort for a stuffed animal or doll.
- Mimic how animals and birds build homes for their young.
- Decide what your stuffed animal needs to live outside, such as a place to hide and sleep.
- Make a meal for your stuffed animals out of seeds, rocks and sticks.
- **And then you can...** Camouflage your stuffed animal with leaf clothing and add other toys and buildings to your fort to make a village.

Supplies: a stuffed animal or two and natural building materials like sticks, rocks and seeds

Muddy as a Muskrat

At a River or Bay Shoreline



- Visit a shore line and look for evidence of wildlife and imagine all that might be living there
- Then mimic through creative play:
 - How seaweed sways on a rock as the waves move over it.
 - How insects and crustaceans dig in the mud and sand.
 - How birds move over the water looking for food.
 - How a muskrat moves into the water
- **And then you can...** Use whatever has washed up on the shore, such as dead seaweed, grasses or vines to make a nest, then use sticks and rocks to make imaginary critters to live in the nests.

Making Tracks

In the Woods



- Frost, snow and frozen mud can be a great place to look at animal and human footprints and imagine the walk and movements of animals.
- Once outside, look for paw, hoof and footprints in the snow and mud.
- Compare the size of your feet to the tracks they find. Imagine who and what left the tracks. Encourage your child to move like that animal.
- Have kids make their own tracks with their feet, hands and stones
- Listen for the sound of making tracks, find spaces where the snow and ice is crunchy, where it 'whispers' and where hardly any tracks are left at all.
- **And then you can...** Sit quietly for a moment and listen for noises in the woods of animals. Decide to follow those noises and see if you can find evidence, or tracks of what was making the noise. Then stop and listen for a new noise.

Snowflake Discovery

At Home

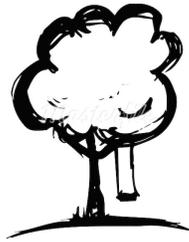


- Keep small squares of black felt in the freezer. While it is snowing, capture some snowflakes on the cold felt. Cold felt will slow the snowflake's melting.
- Look at the snowflakes through a magnifying glass.
- Talk about the shapes you see. Touch, smell and taste the flakes.
- Watch them melt.
- Catch some more.
- Compare, repeat.

Supplies: a snowy day, some black felt kept in the freezer, a magnifying glass

Chase a Leaf

In your Backyard or Neighborhood



- Lie under a tree and watch the leaves move and fall.
- Talk about the leaf's movement.
- Predict which leaf will fall next or which one will fall last.

Consider the wind and how leaves move with the wind.

- Jump up and try to catch the leaf.

Supplies: wind, ground and a few trees

Dig In

At a River or Bay Shoreline



- Dig a hole, with your hands or a shovel, until you find the water table or use a bucket to fill your hole.
- Look for things that float and for things that sink. Watch how the things that float move along the water. Try to find the best natural floating object.
- **And then you can....**make a boat of sticks, vines and leaves strong enough to float an acorn or a pebble. Have contests and races for your creations made entirely out of natural materials.

Seed Discovery

In the Woods



- Wander around and collect as many tree seeds and nuts as you can.
- Count and sort them in different cups. Find similarities and differences.
- Collect different types of leaves.
- Sort leaves by color or shape.
- **And then you can...** use your collections for an art project.

Supplies: baskets or bags for collecting

Bark and Leaf Rubbings

At Home



- Peel the paper off of a crayon.
- Place the leaf vein side up on a table or other hard surface then cover the leaf with paper.
- Rub the paper with the long side of the crayon.
- **And then you can...** make a tree mural by doing bark rubbings for the trunk, and branches and gluing cut out leaves on the branches.

Supplies: leaves, a hard surface for coloring, crayons, paper

SUMMER

Seek and Find

In your Backyard or Neighborhood



- Find the coolest spots in your yard or park.
- Turn over rocks or logs in damp areas looking for pill bugs, ants, slugs and worms.
- Look on the underside of leaves for other bugs
- Place the critters in small plastic containers with holes in the lids to watch the animals crawl around.
- Observe their behavior, try to figure out how they stay cool, get water and find food. Return the bugs to where they lived and return the rock or log to how it was.
- **And then you can....** Keep a species list of the critters you have found. Take pictures of them so you can “keep” the memory of the bugs and then look up the names of them later.

SUMMER

Shade: Sights and Sounds

In the Woods



- Sit or lie under a tree and look up and down the whole tree. Observe how the top of the tree looks different from the bottom of the tree.
- Look for different shapes and patterns in how the branches cross.
- Look for signs of different animals and insects that live in different parts of the tree.
- **And then you can...** play “I spy with my little eye” and “I hear with my little ear” sights and sounds of nature in the summer-time.

SUMMER

Jump In

At a River or Bay Shoreline



- Wade through the waves.
- Use simple supplies: small aquarium nets, kitchen colanders, clear plastic buckets to capture small water bugs and fish
- Build a seine net by tying two sides of soft netting between two poles. Even a small net 3 to 6 feet wide can catch bugs and fish on the shoreline.
- Have clear plastic buckets ready for your critters in the shade with water and some rocks.
- **And then you can...** Watch how the fish and bugs behave once you put them in the bucket and after they get used to it. Keep the bucket in the shade to help keep the water cool and full of oxygen. Only keep the fish for a brief observation and then let them go.

Supplies: Small seine nets, or other small nets, plastic buckets

SUMMER

Spotting Scopes

At Home



- Gather materials.
- Tape the rolls together, punch two holes and attach the string.
- Decorate with stickers and markers.
- **And then you can....** Hide some toy animals from each other in the grass and trees and try to find with your spotting scopes.

Supplies: Paper towel roll or toilet paper rolls, string, tape and a hole punch.

Make a Mud Pie

In your Backyard or Neighborhood



- Find or make a mud puddle. You can use the dirt in your yard or put a tarp down on a picnic table and buy a bag of top soil.
- Make mud pies with water, spoons and pans.
- Decorate the mud pies with flowers, twigs and seeds.
- Note how different types of dirt make different mud.
- **And then you can...** Start a season-long search for the best mud in the neighborhood. Take pictures of each of your creations and make a photo collage of them at home.

Supplies: dirt, water, old wooden spoons and pans

Underwater Discovery

At a River or Bay Shoreline



- Make an underwater spotting scope: Cut the top and bottom off of a half gallon milk carton
- Wrap plastic wrap tightly around the bottom of the carton, then secure the plastic wrap in place with duct tape or a rubber band
- Lower the viewer into the water and place your eyes over the top of the viewer
- **And then you can....** Find every color of the rainbow in rocks and sand, look for where the shore line critters live and where they hide.

Homes for Gnomes

In the Woods



- Find a small corner, such as an exposed root of a tree, and build a house for a fairy or a gnome.
- Imagine what they will need: a protected space, a place to eat and sleep, and a way to get in and out of their house.
- Imagine what they would want, such as different colored rocks, flower petals and leaves as decorations.
- Build their home without glue or tape, just by balancing the materials
- **And then you can....** Take pictures of your creations and develop stories of who lives there and what they do.

Supplies: natural building materials, such as bark, river stones, acorns, leaves and sticks.

Painting Spring

At Home



- Use evergreen needles, pussy willows and other natural objects to paint the textures and colors of spring.
- Look for signs of spring while walking or driving. Talk about the colors and shapes you see.
- Dip pine needles, pussy willows and grasses into the paints and use as a brush.
- Use different materials for different effects.
- **And then you can...** make a large collage of spring by gluing several paintings and the natural objects on a poster board

Supplies: tempera or other craft paints, paper, water, evergreen needles, pussy willows, dried grass seed heads