

INVESTIGATING... *summer*



Exciting and educational ways to explore the great outdoors from Woodland Trust's Nature Detectives...

their moment of glory on the winners podium.

Snails are very delicate and their happiness is a key part of this activity. It's a great opportunity for teaching children to think about handling a living creature carefully. Don't forget to put the snails back where they were found as soon as you finish.

Resources: tinyurl.com/TNsnails

Outdoor Art

Woods, parks and gardens are full of free art materials that are perfect for creating outdoor masterpieces with nursery children. As a blank canvas, source a large piece of paper, or use the playground or woodland floor. Let the children be creative with natural treasures such as leaves, petals, grass, bark, mud and twigs - the wider the variety of materials the better the finished artwork.

Children can create patterns, draw woodland scenes or even stick on the lighter items. Let their imaginations run free, and encourage them to work together to create a masterpiece that they will treasure. When finished, display the artwork in the playroom for parents, guardians and carers to see.

Resources: tinyurl.com/TNartout

findoutmore

Nature Detectives offers over a thousand downloadable resources for children, early years practitioners and teachers, all available for free, providing hours of fun that incorporates nature, learning and creativity. Head to www.naturedetectives.org.uk/teachnursery and start your summer fun now.



Outdoor learning plays a valuable role in developing children as well-rounded individuals. Giving them positive experiences of nature during their early years will embed within them the value of our precious natural environment - and when better to find positive experiences than during summer, the season children adore for its warm weather and ice cream, trips to the park, and abundance of flowers, birds and bugs (and much more!). It's the time of year that's ideal for maximizing children's love for the outdoors and making sure they spend time outside that's both enjoyable and educational.

Here are some great ideas to get you started, and you'll find lots more at the Nature Detectives summer area (www.naturedetectives.org.uk/summer) - from wildlife spotting sheets to yummy blackberry recipes, picnic kits and den-building guides, get set for a summer of adventures!

Leaf Boats & Twig Rafts

Makeshift boats and rafts are great for sailing across puddles or even in buckets of water. It's easy to make sailing boats with children using leaves, bark and twigs. Set the children the challenge of making their own boats using materials found outside and help them discover what sinks, what floats and what sails.

Encourage the children to test for themselves which items will stay afloat; get them talking about what each material looks and feels like, and where it might come from.

If the children manage to create sailable boats, use a twig for a flag pole and ask them to see what they can fly from it - they could use leaves, petals or whatever takes their imagination. If you have plenty of time, you could even race the boats by encouraging children to blow them across the water, or decorate them. This activity is great fun and gets children thinking and talking about physics in a practical, straightforward manner.

Resources: tinyurl.com/TNboats

Snail Racing

Snail Racing is a hands-on way to get kids up close to nature. It's great for getting lots of children involved at once, and is guaranteed to create a lively, exciting atmosphere. The downloadable 'Snail Racing Kit' (link below) allows you to make a race track and hold your own snail racing championships, but here are some tips to get you started. Find snails to use as competitors shortly before the race; look for them in dark, wet places in the nursery garden or at home. When it comes to racing, let each child pick a snail to cheer for, then name them and tag each one with a coloured sticker so you and the children know which is which. Ask them who they think will be fastest and why.

Set the snails up on the track with juicy lettuce leaves at the end and set them to start... Ready, steady, slow! Which snail is the champion? How fast did they finish? Let the children carefully stick each snail's trophy on their shell and give them