

# Nature Benefit!

## A game of ecology & gratitude



Play is a means of deep learning for young children. In Gaffield Children's Garden, we provide rich, open-ended Nature Play experiences. We are committed to it, knowing that these experiences will become an essential part of the child, will be transformed into intellectual pursuits, imaginative pursuits, support physical and emotional health, and promote positive regard for the Earth now and into adulthood. We encourage families to participate and replicate what we do here, in their own homes, apartments, and parks. Here is a recipe for **Nature Play at Home: Nature Benefit game!**

### WAYS TO PLAY

- depending on age & developmental stage of child, this game may take several forms, a simple call and response, or an informal yet surprisingly complex elucidation of the interconnectedness of Nature, including humans
- in this game every answer is 'right' and you should count on some silly answers; it's the connection and the playful way of making meaning together that is the point

### OPTION FOR LITTLE LITTLES

- go outdoors for an adventure -- adventures are always way more fun than a 'walk'
- upon viewing the first element of nature, suggest: "I know a game: Look at that huge tree. Remind me, what are trees good for?"
- child might answer simply: "shade" or "for birds' homes" or "it's pretty"
- affirm & invite the child to take a turn: identify the object of Nature, ask the question, think up responses

### OPTION FOR BIG LITTLES

- introduce as a game
- for older children, perhaps their answer leads to the next question, for example: "What are clouds even good for?" child may answer something like "Clouds make rain!" "What is rain good for?" "Rain fills our lakes" "What are lakes good for?" "Lakes are where fish live!" "What are fish good for?" etc, etc
- it will get silly, thank goodness! this is not school, it's play!
- if a child is house bound due to illness, you can play this while looking out a window

### CONSIDER

- After introducing the game, remember to let the kiddos lead the way
- this game turns around the curious questioning of a toddler or preschool-aged child's developmental stage of "why?"
- for older children, this is a playful way to engage in conversations that foster their burgeoning understanding of themselves in relationship to the world around them, as well as strengthening family connection and identity
- Play is about fun, and is the way young children learn about themselves and the world

