

Stick gardens!

Outdoor/indoor tree play

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: Stick Garden Play!

SUPPLIES!

- for outdoor version:
- access to a sand box or fallow garden bed
- foraged sticks, fallen branches, cones
- string or twine

- for indoor version:
- twigs, evergreen cuttings, seedpods,
- toothpicks, construction paper, paper tube sections, markers,
- modeling clay, play dough or sand tray

PLAY OUTDOORS!

- announce your excitement about fallen sticks and branches: "Yes! these are going to make an excellent stick garden!"
- invite your littles to help collect the sticks, maybe leaves, maybe cones fallen from pines, spruces, etc
- invite children to plant the sticks, cones, etc in the soil or sand to create a 'stick garden,' step back and let the kiddos lead

PLAY INDOORS!

- ahead of time, prepare dough or sand tray, paper tube sections
- take a walk to forage natural materials: twigs, seed pods,
- invite kiddo to 'make a stick garden' sticking bits of twigs into sand or dough
- older children may enjoy creating a 'gratitude tree' -- cutting out paper leaves and writing brief notes of thanksgiving and appreciation

CONSIDER

- whether outdoors or inside, the stick gardens can become the basis of additional 'small world' play w/+ toy animals, dinosaurs, dolls, etc
- Remember to let the kiddos lead the way.
- Play is about fun, and is the way young children learn about themselves and the world.

