**BURIED Treasure**

Kids love to dig!

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: Buried Treasures!

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**SUPPLIES!**

- Choice of treasures to bury: seashells, dinosaur toys, fossils, special rocks/gems/minerals, small toys
- Small trowels
- Small paintbrushes for cleaning treasures
- Magnifying lenses
- Trays of clean play sand, if not digging directly in the soil

**PLAY!**

- Bury the treasures, or encourage the children to bury the treasures for each other
- Introduce the digging tools and back away
- Children might want to brush off the treasures with the paintbrushes, like the pros do

**MORE PLAY?**

- Set up a washing station nearby
- Provide some field guides to support interest in dinosaurs or gems/minerals treasures
- Consider storybooks which match the digging theme
- Take it larger: “bury” treasures across the yard, park, even in the home on inclimate weather days

**CONSIDER**

- Older children love making maps; treasure maps are a great extension if they feel inspired
- Remember to let the kiddos lead the way
- The difference between play and “activities” largely comes down to who leads it. In play, children lead based on their own interests and curiosity. In “activities,” it is the adults’ agenda leading things

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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN MATTHAEI BOTANICAL GARDENS & NICHOLS ARBORETUM