SOIL Explorations

Complex and busy soil dwellers

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: Soil Exploration!

SUPPLIES!
- small shovels or trowels
- sifters, colanders, mesh fabric
- buckets or pails
- magnifying glass or magnifier app
- field guide to soil creatures?

PLAY!
- allow children to dig in an area, catching the soil in a bucket or pail
- use the sifter or mesh to sift through the soil, looking for insect and invertebrates
- use magnifier to look closely
- may wish to identify creatures found, or tally numbers of creatures

MORE PLAY?
- this generally requires a spot with access for digging, but an alternative is to gently turn logs while hiking, making sure to reposition them afterward
- use “I wonder” phrases to try to guess life cycle stages based on body parts
- make up some silly songs about living in the soil

CONSIDER
- If the weather has been very dry, might want to run a sprinkler — and let the kiddos run through the sprinkler — the day before digging
- 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,” the adult agenda is leading

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