Imaginative, messy 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: Mud Kitchen!

SUPPLIES!
- access to a patch of open soil or a low-edged bin of soil
- spare kitchen tools: spoons, pans, whisks, spatulas, plates, molds, shakers, colanders, cups
- small foraged pebbles, stones, sticks
- foraged plant materials, such as grass clippings, flowers, seed pods
- bottle or pitcher of water for mixing mud

PLAY!
- encourage child to forage materials, or set out materials
- model the mixing of a little water with a little soil to make mud once
- turn mud loose!
- mud play is highly sensory, each child has their own sensory threshold, let the child lead

MORE PLAY?
- designate a ‘cooking’ area--could be a cardboard box, a wooden crate, a big sheet of paper with heating elements drawn on it
- set up a ‘dining’ area
- mud cakes can become mud balls and balls can be thrown at a target
- stone soup is a variant on mud play, as is ice and water play
- next week, Mud Play, part 2

CONSIDER
- 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.
- participating in transformation play is great brain play
- as long as the soil is clean, soil play is healthy play