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: Pumpkin Play!

### Pumpkin Launch!
- **what to do with the pumpkins after Halloween?** Pumpkin Launch!
- **COLLECT:** pumpkins, mini pumpkins, jack-o-lanterns
- **PLAY:** Set out supplies and say “I wonder if these pumpkins can float?”
- Kiddos can make boats out of the mini pumpkins using fabric and toothpicks for sails and masts.
- Forage other items -- acorns, sticks, stones -- to check their buoyancy
- Compost the remains

### Pumpkin Boats!
- **COLLECT:** mini pumpkins, shallow tabletop tub w/ water, construction paper, fabrics, toothpicks or dowel sections
- **PLAY:** Kiddos can make boats out of the mini pumpkins using fabric and toothpicks for sails and masts.
- Forage other items -- acorns, sticks, stones -- to check their buoyancy

### More Play?
- Very little children will have fun simply washing the pumpkins in a shallow tub or sink. Always directly supervise children near water.
- Young children may enjoy sorting pumpkins according to size, shape or color.
- Older kids might view a video of the Westcoast Giant Pumpkin Regatta to spark their imagination.

### 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’s agenda is leading.
- Play is about fun, and it is the way young children learn about themselves in the world.