

Forest School For All



Forest Discoverers
12-Week Cool Weather Curriculum





Introduction



A note about the Forest Discoverers Curriculum

The Forest Discoverers Curriculum is specifically designed so young children can creatively discover the natural world around them, in a variety of hands-on ways. Spread across 12 weeks, but easily adaptable to the timeframe of your interest, each week of the curriculum introduces a theme to the children. Within each theme, you will find resources for readings (a book list will be given each week), individual exploration, various activities, and Q&A discussion questions.

Each session will begin in the forest by introducing that week's theme. This helps the children begin thinking about its connection to the natural world. Following this, there is an opportunity to explore the forest and collect any natural materials the children wish to explore further. This may be playful and exploratory, depending on the child and their level of comfortability in the forest. At this point, you will come back together to combine any natural materials with the activities you've laid out. This is often where the discovery process dives deep. You can incorporate the discussion questions throughout your time, at the end of the session or as a followup back home.

For the activities, there will be different "stations" set up to provide the children with various options to participate, and allow older children the ability to use their unique interests and gifts to express themselves in a variety of ways. Each station will offer an activity in a different subject area - such as art, music, science, storytelling, mathematics, etc. This gives children the opportunity to explore what they are most interested in learning and investigating each week. By offering multiple options for activities, this also helps children who like to explore many different areas, or children who may be new to forest exploration, a good match for discovery.

The flow of each week may vary. Often, the sessions bounce between free play and activities. And sometimes they are one in the same. Respect for a child's interests and ability to guide themselves through their experiences is very important. It is magical when children can learn and grow through open-ended free play and self-direction. Usually, the materials and the activities provided find their way into a child's play in ways we least expect it. We are endlessly reminded that children open our minds to a new way of thinking and seeing the world. As such, these activities are to be used as a guideline, but open-ended free play should always be made available to the children when out in the forest. After all, play is a child's greatest work! You may find your child takes the prompt and materials and goes in a completely different direction. That creativity is welcome and encouraged. We invite you to allow children to come and go into the various activities freely and participate in their own unique ways. This is exactly why we like to say this program is parent-facilitated, but child-led. With the Forest Discoverers Curriculum, children are given the opportunity to take the lead in their discoveries, in their engagement with nature and in their play.



Week 6: Observation



Throughout colder weather, whether your area gets snow or not, the forest changes and gives you an opportunity to see new and different parts. This week we're focusing on the parts that may not be as visible when there are lots of leaves, flowers and new growth.

Activities

01. Animal Spotting (Science)

Footprints are easy to spot, especially in muddy soil. Encourage the children to look around for muddy or soft ground areas to see if they can spot any animal footprints. Use our footprint tracking guide (pg 16) to see if it matches any of the animal prints we've found. And, if they don't, encourage them to make their own and try to guess. Another way to spot nearby animals are by the shells they leave behind. Gnawed pinecones and nuts are often found under trees by birds, squirrels and chipmunks. Trimmed trees or bushes may mean that deer have been eating. Rubbed bark off of trees can mean that animals have been using it to scratch themselves. See if you can find any of those, or other clues suggesting animals may have shared this part of the forest.

02. Tree Types (Science)

This is a fun way of exploring the different types of trees in your forest. Most forests have two types of trees who leave droppings in the cooler months, deciduous and conifers. Find a large area and have the children build a big D and C out of natural objects for the different types of trees. Then, have them explore the forest for parts of trees that have dropped and bring them back to the appropriate letter. Deciduous tree droppings would be leaves (deciduous is taken from a latin word that means "to fall"), Coniferous tree droppings would be cones (conifer comes from the latin phrase "cone bearing"). When they've feel they've built large enough piles, they can use their findings for the next project.

03. Nature Crowns (Art)

Using the tree droppings gathered from prompt 02 and any other natural objects found around them, children can create. Cut card stock into strips, longwise, and tape them together to in a length that would fit each child, without actually taping it to fit the head yet. Using double sided tape (either as long sticky strips across the crown or pieces for each individual item), tape their tree droppings and forest findings to their crown to decorate it. Once completed, finishing the taping of the crown so it fits the child's head.



Week 6: Observation



Forest School For All Tracking Guide of Wildlife



Deer



Fox



Badger



Squirrel



Black Bear



Caribou



Coyote



Bobcat





Week 6: Observation



Supplies Needed

- Cardstock (1 per child)
- Double-sided tape (1 per every 2 children)
- Scissors

Closing

- Discuss all the various observations the children discovered today when exploring and adventuring. How is the site different from other times of the year when they have played here?
- Allow for open share time, to allow children to share freely what they discovered and found interesting about the time spent together.

Book List Suggestions

- Whose Tracks are These? A Clue Book of Familiar Forest Animals by James Nail (ages 6-10)
- Tracks in the Snow by Wong Herbert Yee (ages 3-7)
- Because of an Acorn by Lola Schaefer (ages 4-8)

Continue at Home

This week we took some time to observe how the forest changes during the colder months. Your child spent time exploring the site, looking for traces of animals, categorizing trees and creating fashionable forest adornments. To continue this observation at home, take a family nature walk or hike together and really pay attention to the way the forest is changing for the colder temperature.

Discuss the various colors and enjoy the way nature is changing on an almost daily basis.





Full List of Supplies*



bucket
twine
scissors
drop cloth
paint
paper plates
wooden eggs
water
whistles
markers
paint brushes
bells
washers

markers
bottles
glue
crayons
sharpened pencils
compass
double-sided tape
roll of white easel paper
masking tape
card stock
map of the local forest
index cards
string

*Note: You can find these items linked to Forest School For All's Amazon Affiliate Account on the webpage: forestschoolorall.com/cool-weather-forest-discoverers-supplies-books/. By purchasing items via these links, you further support FSFA and our mission. Thanks!



List of Books*



Week 1

- Step Gently Out by Helen Frost (ages 2-5)
- The World is Waiting for You by Barbara Kerley (4-9)
- Time to Sleep (An Owlet Book) by Denise Fleming (ages 3-7)

Week 3

- The Mitten by Jan Brett (ages 4-6)
- After The Fall (How Humpty Got Back Up Again) by Dan Santat (ages 4-8)
- Earl the Earthworm Digs for His Life by Tim Magner (ages 5-9)

Week 5

- Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf by Lois Ehlert (ages 2-6)
- A Seed is Sleepy by Dianna Aston (ages 7-11)
- Red Sings from Treetops by Joyce Sidman (ages 6-10)

Week 7

- A Whiff of Pine, a Hint of Skunk: A Forest of Poems by Deborah Ruddell (ages 6-9)
- Sounds of the Wild: Forest by Maurice Pledger (ages 5-9)
- Katie Did Learn The Five Senses by Betty Kirbo (ages 3-7)

Week 9

- Stick Man by Julia Donaldson (ages 3-8)
- Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak (all ages)
- The Whisper by Pamela Zagarenski (ages 4-7)

Week 11

- One Small Square: Woods by Donald Silver (ages 6-9)
- The Girl Who Never Made Mistakes by Mark Pett (ages 4-8)
- Teamwork Isn't My Thing, and I Don't Like to Share (Best Me I Can Be!) by Julia Cook (ages 5-9)

Week 2

- Fletcher and the Falling Leaves by Julia Rawlinson (ages 5-9)
- Let's Paint by Gabriel Alborozo (ages 3-6)
- Leaf Man by Lois Ehlert (ages 2-6)

Week 4

- Stick and Stone by Beth Ferry (ages 3-6)
- An Operation of Cooperation (A Sami and Thomas Adventure) by James McDonald (ages 4-8)
- Teamwork Isn't My Thing, and I Don't Like to Share! (ages 5-9)

Week 6

- Whose Tracks Are These? A Clue Book of Familiar Forest Animals by James Nail - (ages 6-10)
- Tracks in the Snow by Wong Herbert Yee (ages 3-7)
- Because of an Acorn by Lola and Adam Schaefer (ages 4-8)

Week 8

- Looking for a Moose by Phyllis Root (ages 3-7)
- Inch by Inch by Leo Lionni (ages 4-8)
- As the Crow Flies by Gail Hartman (ages 3-8)

Week 10

- Forest Has a Song by Amy Ludwig VanDerwater (poetry) (ages 6-9)
- Sounds of the Wild: Nighttime by Maurice Pledger (5-7)
- The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson (2-8)

Week 12

- The Day The Crayons Quit by Drew Daywalt (ages 3-7)
- What Do You Do With An Idea? By Kobi Yamada (ages 5-8)
- Beautiful Oops by Barney Saltzberg (ages 3-8)

*Note: You can find these items linked to Forest School For All's Amazon Affiliate Account on the webpage: forestschoolorall.com/cool-weather-forest-discoverers-supplies-books/. By purchasing items via these links, you further support FSFA and our mission. Thanks!