



Miriam's drawing, 6 years old

### "Nature Explore™" Session

Children have been discovering the wonders of nature as they've worked and played in our own Nature Explore™ Outdoor Classroom. They had fun using materials created in collaboration with Arbor Day Foundation as they went on nature walks and other adventures. They also played natural musical instruments and built with "tree cookies" and other creative materials.



Liem, age 2, playing with tree cookies



"We used fine motor skills to measure string and thread it through wooden beads. The students chose a different color of bead for each thing plants need. The colored beads represented location or a place to grow, water, soil, nutrients, sunlight, care and some need pollinators."

Ms. Murdoch

## Nature Encourages Adventures This Week

### Infants

The infants explored "frame and cover" this week. We draped fabric pieces around the room for children to crawl under and to create tunnels for them to crawl through. Some of the children even pointed out the changes to the room. We read more about frame and cover in "Houses Around the World". We also went on walks and looked at trees outside (another form of frame and cover). The children played with pipe cleaners to mimic the bending and moving of branches on the trees.

The color of the week is yellow (amarillo in Spanish). Yellow duck and bee puppets quacked and buzzed at the children. There were even puppet kisses that made the children giggle!



Yellow scarves, yellow shakers and a large yellow piece of sheer material made our Music and Movement time

colorful and musical. Empty ice cream buckets made great drums for the children to bang on. Sign language and finger puppets accompanied the songs "Eensy Weensy Spider", "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" and "Hickory Dickory Dock."

*Contributed by Joleen Podtburg and Denise Topil*

### Toddlers

We have had a "tree"-mendous week in Toddler A! We began our exploration this week by taking a walk outside to look at the trees. We found big trees and small trees, "twisty-twirly" trees and trees we could walk under for shade. We enjoyed moving our bodies like the twisty-twirl tree.



On one of our adventures, we walked past a pine tree so we stopped to explore it. The view from under the tree was fascinating and we laid down on the ground to see it better. Every child used clipboards, paper and pencils to sketch what they saw in the tree.

The books "Have You Seen Trees?" and "Be A Friend to Trees" helped us see trees that don't grow around our school. We made our bodies look like those trees, too. "Shape-

makers" (pipe cleaners) were used to copy the shape of trees. We bent them to match our tree. Sounds were used to help us recognize a shape. A curved palm tree made a "whoop" sound as we traced it with our fingers.

We traveled outside again to gather sticks. We enjoyed the chance to collect sticks and interact with nature. We learned that sticks come from trees, and some have leaves on them. The sticks we collected were used to create artwork. Everyone enjoyed seeing, sketching, touching and gluing trees.

*Contributed by Katie Sharp and Joy Ritchie*

We have had great outdoor times together this week in Toddler B. Early in the week we walked around the neighborhood looking for shapes in nature. We were surprised to find as many as we did. Tommy found the letter "T" in a crack on the sidewalk; Cole found a plant that looked like a star; Sophie discovered an oval leaf; and Maddie found a rectangle-shaped piece of bark. These were just some of the many shapes that we found... circles, triangles, rectangles, stars, ovals, and squares. Then we began to recognize shapes all around in nature and we continued our discoveries as we played in the Nature Explore Classroom. Louis even found a triangle on the play structure!

One day we walked to Hazel Abel Park where we had an important job to do – we took corn with us to sprinkle in the bushes and "forest" to feed the birds and squirrels who live there. We were so excited that on our way to the park we invited all the birds and squirrels we saw to follow us there.

Another adventure outside was our walk to the Sunken Gardens. We were so happy to see all the flowers, colors, bugs and fish. It was a fantastic time as we played and showed our knowledge about trees, colors, butterflies, flowers and water as we walked around the garden. Among our favorites at the Sunken Gardens were the elephant ear leaves and watching all the goldfish swimming in and out of the lily pads.

After such a busy week outdoors, we are all looking forward to having a week off before we come back to school!

*Contributed by Amy Jensen and Laurie Flynn*



# Nature Is Experienced While Inside and Outdoors This Week

## Preschoolers

This week the preschoolers have been very busy exploring nature. The week started by looking at trees. We read the book "Look Inside a Tree" and looked at the different parts of a tree. Then we made these parts with our bodies. We used arms, legs, fingers and toes to make roots, trunks, branches and leaves.



We continued the week looking at trees by going on a tree walk. Using pipe cleaners,

we recreated parts of the trees we saw. Olivia saw the letter "V" in branches and Talley found an upside down letter "L". Emma S. found the letter "S" in the tree bark. We also found the letter "M" in a tree's roots. Our pipe cleaners stayed very busy!



Later in the week we explored cacti. We learned that a cactus stores water inside and it has needles to protect the water from animals. We used play doh, pipe cleaners, toothpicks and other pokey items to represent needles in the cactus.

We also read the book "Over in the Garden" and acted out the different insects by rolling, marching and nibbling like they did in the book. We finished the week by observing and sketching trees outside. "It's fun to be outside!"

*Contributed by Kristine Roit*



## Kindergarten – 1st Grade AM

K-1 began their week with the exploration of trees using Nature Explore Activities titled "Your Tree Sculpture Adventure." We closely observed trees from multiple

perspectives. Using pipe cleaners as tools, the children bent their pipe cleaners into



interesting shapes that matched shapes found on their chosen tree. This enhanced our discovery of multiple perspectives! The children extended their



observations by climbing in trees, and laying on the ground and looking up at the branches using binoculars.

The class also studied the oil painting, *The Lawrence Tree* (1929), by Georgia O'Keefe. We discussed O'Keefe's technique, foreshortening, which is a way of using our imagination while viewing the size and dimensions of parts of a tree from near and far, or using our imagination to discover new dimensions.



We later moved our bodies into the shapes we created with pipe cleaners and called our movements Tree Yoga. We also hung a sheet to turn our movements into a shadow dance with music.

*Contributed by Joyce White*

## Kindergarten – 1st Grade PM

The artist Georgia O'Keefe used shapes and colors to say things that could not be said by words. K-1's began their afternoon exploration of nature by creating "glaciers" with sand, gravel and water frozen in drinking cups. As these glaciers thawed,



children could see the effect melting ice has on Earth's landscapes. We learned about deserts and created sand art. We danced with

ribbon streamers to "Desert Moon Song" by Dean Evenson and created new shapes and designs by painting with corncobs

*Contributed by Kathy Marshall*

### Staff Birthdays

Denise Topil .....	July 21
Kathy Tichota .....	July 22
Tara Hild .....	August 7
Kristi Reitz .....	August 13
Chris Dickhaut .....	August 16
Sue Erdkamp .....	August 17
Jason Kelly .....	August 17
Ann Watt .....	August 19

## Musings from the 2-5 Group

*Contributed by Holly Murdoch*



"Chopping was easier because I knew how to use a pocket knife." John (as they were making salsa)



"I was looking at a slug." Jacobson



"I was laying seeds 2 inches apart." Logan (practicing to plant seeds in soil)



"This is Salsa Bob. The vegetables were picked from the garden. The paper is Bob's long hair. Salsa Bob is cool."

*Sunho*

## Summer Sessions Bookshelf

*Houses Around the World* by Patricia F. Frakes  
*Colors and Shapes* by Playmore, Inc.  
*Have You Seen Trees* by Joanne Oppenheim  
*Be a Friend to Trees* by Patricia Lauber  
*From Eggs to Robin* by Jan Kottke  
*Look Inside a Tree* by Gina Ingoglia  
*Over in the Garden* by Jennifer Ward  
*Milkwood Visitors* by Mary Holland

*Photographs contributed by Holly Murdoch, Beth Pauley, Katie Sharp, and Joyce White.*

Nature Explore™ Classrooms are part of a national initiative that we are working with in partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation.

Newsletters and Program information can be found on-line ...

[www.dimensionsfoundation.org](http://www.dimensionsfoundation.org) or [www.firstplymouth.org](http://www.firstplymouth.org)