

Nature Play

Moving forward – next steps

MY
NATURE
PLAY

It is important to regularly review year round outdoor nature play opportunities. Involve staff, children and parents with developing and implementing ideas



Positive promotion

Review how the benefits of nature play, and its links to child development, are promoted by nursery to support understanding amongst parents. Develop an outdoor policy that helps disseminate the message and include lots of outdoor play photos in communications. If nature is limited in your space, encourage donations of natural resources from parents, collect items when out and about, use containers for planting

and encouraging minibeasts and include different materials such as sand, water and mud. If there is green space avoid mowing and trimming and encourage access. Again, positive messaging is important here, communicating the value of wild spaces to parents and visitors (highlighting the associated play value of an unmaintained space). Communication between staff too, for example allowing children to hide and what to do if a thistle or nettle is found.

Summary

- Audit your outdoor space for nature play opportunities and identify gaps.
- Review existing loose materials provision and include more natural items.
- Incorporate planting for play, for example screening, den building, shade, atmosphere, small world. Make use of vertical surfaces to save floor space.
- Include different textures and surfaces – soil / mud, water, sand, pebbles.
- Allow green areas to grow wild and embrace the opportunities this offers.

Climate change

Help children begin to understand the importance of climate change through nature play, highlighting that they can make a positive contribution through practical change. Experiencing the natural world in the early years has the power to shape deep and long lasting connections to nature.



A sense of place

Going beyond your boundary and making use of local, walk to green spaces is another way of supporting nature play. Repeated visits to the same place throughout the year allows children to experience nature through seasonal change and helps develop a sense of place through a connection with their local environment, experiencing awe and wonder through observation and enquiry with practitioners following their lead.

Growing food

Growing food supports children's understanding of where food comes from, encourages healthy eating habits and the process requires patience and routine. Digging for play is a popular open ended, sensory rich experience with no set outcome that strengthens motor skills, supports scientific thinking and provides calming regulation. Encouraging both outdoors can be tricky if you want to avoid everything being dug up! Consider location, visual cues, screening, use of raised planters for food growing and digging in the grass, use of vertical surface and resources like hanging baskets.