

Nature play

For children, play is learning. At Mawson Lakes Preschool we strongly believe that providing a play based program, especially one which sees children spending extended time out in nature improves all aspects of child development. There is no better space for children to learn than the outdoors, and there is no better play resource than nature.

One of the best lessons children can be taught in their early years is to play outdoors. Nature play benefits all aspects of child development – physical, cognitive, social and emotional. Playing outdoors grows resilience, self-confidence, initiative, creativity and more. It encourages the joy of movement; it nurtures wild imaginations, experimentation, friendships, social connections and behaviour.

When children are engaged in self-directed exploration, there are more questions than answers, there is the time and space to develop theories and hypothesise about outcomes of each decision, time to make mistakes and use them not as a negative, but as an imperative and integral part of the learning process.

Here are some nature play ideas for you to explore as a family

- 🌿 Rubbings- Give children a sheet of paper and crayons or coloured pencils to take rubbings of different textures.
- 🌿 Flower Pressing – Preserve a little piece of your outdoor adventure by pressing flowers. Take a walk with your child to find some of their favourite flowers to press.
- 🌿 Archaeologist for a day - If you have a sand pit or a clear section in the garden, bury a range of small items such plastic dinosaurs, toys, or blocks. Watch them have fun excavating the dig site for artefacts.
- 🌿 Daisy chain jewellery– Teach your kids to make daisy chains, or use any other flower that is abundant in your garden
- 🌿 Decorate a pet rock
- 🌿 Nature collage
- 🌿 Animal detective –Search for signs of animals in your garden or on a bush walk.
- 🌿 Easy outdoor tent
- 🌿 Shaving cream play
- 🌿 Experiment with nature- Pick a flower, place it in a glass of water with some food colouring or dye and watch the petals change colour
- 🌿 Build a scarecrow for your veggie patch
- 🌿 Go on a bush walk- See how many wildflowers you can find

Helpful Tips

At Preschool we have a big focus on fine motor skill development; cutting, drawing, tracing, painting, printing, creating as well as task orientation; planning, using self-talk, gathering items to use, thinking a task through, working out the steps needed and working with confidence, intrinsic motivation and pride in our work.

You may also enjoy going for a walk or play in a park and gather some interesting materials. Take them home and create items, pictures and designs together. Arrange natural materials on paper; cutting stems and leaves with scissors to create designs that you can then frame and display demonstrating to your child you value their efforts and time spent together!

For more ideas about playing outside and engaging in nature, check out the Nature Play SA website <https://natureplaysa.org.au/>