



IMAGINITIVE PLAY AT THE CONSERVATORY

Imaginations are free to run wild in the Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation Children's Garden!
The Sunrise Lawn is the perfect place to blow off steam and let kids be kids –
a lighthearted invitation for spontaneous family fun.

The Nature Play Zone, beneath the shade of the Mulberry Tree,
lets children and their caregivers discover a wonderland
of fort building, digging, stump jumps and physical fitness.

Limited only by a child's imagination, playtime here is spontaneous,
unscripted and fresh with each new day.



BACKYARD BINOCULAR HUNT

Have you ever used a pair of binoculars? Binoculars are like two telescopes that you hold to both of your eyes at the same time. They magnify things that are far away. Today, we'll make our own fun binoculars to help us take an imaginary binocular hunt. They won't really magnify things, but you can use your own imaginations to bring far away things a little closer!



All you need for a pair of binoculars are your hands!

Just make your hands into circles and put them up to your eyes for your own take everywhere pair! You can also make your own binoculars by using two toilet paper rolls or ask an adult to cut a paper towel roll in half or help you roll up pieces of paper taped into rolls (heavier weight paper is best). Tape, staple, or glue the rolls together in the middle and decorate your binoculars using markers, paint, and other craft supplies (just make sure you can still comfortably hold your binoculars in your hands). Once dried, go outside and pretend to be on an exploration trail.



Even though their binoculars won't make things look closer, it can help focus your sight on cool things while on a backyard exploration.

Can you find real birds, rocks, leaves, and flowers through your binoculars? Make sure you look up high and look down low. Draw a picture of some of the things you've been able to see through your binoculars.



With our special binoculars, we don't have to focus on the things we see in our neighborhood! Can you imagine being in another part of the country or the world on a binocular hunt?

- 🌿 How would you go on an exploration in a jungle?
- 🌿 What do you think you would see?
- 🌿 What if you wanted to climb to the top of a mountain?
- 🌿 How would you climb and what would you see on your way?
- 🌿 What would you need to explore in a desert? On a glacier?
- 🌿 What do you see in these parts of the world?

Explore all of these areas and talk about all of the things you've imagined. Write down some of your favorite things you have imagined while exploring or draw a picture of some of the things you've imagined.

ANIMAL WALK WALKS

Take a walk on the wild side and take an Animal Walk walk! Imagine what it would be like to get around like a different kind of animal by taking a walk (or a hop or a crawl) like various animals. You can walk like animals in your neighborhood and like those you've only seen in a book or at the zoo. This is a great activity to do outside, but can also be done indoors in bad weather. Add obstacles like pillows or toys to maneuver around to up the difficulty factor! And don't forget the arm motions and animal sounds!!!



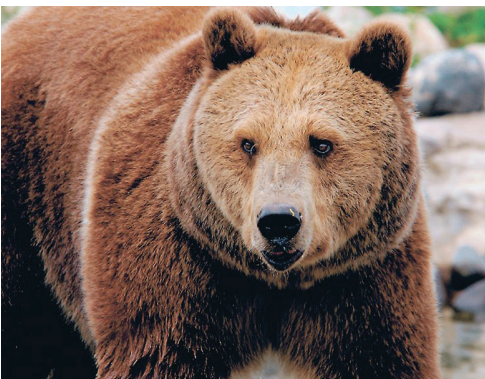
Think and journal about:

- 🌿 Where does the animal live—in your backyard, in the desert, in the tops of trees, in the ice and snow?
- 🌿 How does an animal's habitat (where it lives) change how they walk? What if, instead of waddling, a penguin ran over the ice like a cheetah? Would he fall down?
- 🌿 Which walks are easiest to do and which are hardest?
- 🌿 Which is the silliest?
- 🌿 Which animal would you like to be?



Here are some ideas to get you started, but think of animal walks you want to try!

- 🌿 Hop like a rabbit (make little jumps around the yard)
- 🌿 Slither like a snake (get down and slide)
- 🌿 Walk like a turtle (walk slowly on all fours and make sure your head is poking out of your shell. Stop and pull your head in like you're tucking into your shell!)
- 🌿 "Fly" like a bird (flap your arms while walking and then...take off! Jump in place and flap your "wings")
- 🌿 "Swim" like a fish (dodge in and out of objects while flapping your "fins")
- 🌿 Kick like a donkey (lift your legs out behind one at a time while you walk)
- 🌿 Crawl like a crab (lay on your back and push yourself up with your hands behind you and try to crawl backwards)
- 🌿 Crawl like an inchworm (make a triangle by standing up tall and bending at the waist to put your hands flat on the ground in front of you—walk your hands forward and back and inch along)
- 🌿 Walk like a bear (crawl on all fours)



TAKE A TINY HIKE!

Can you imagine what the world would look like if you were a bug? Can you make-believe what it would be like to be outside and be the size of a tiny fairy or even one of your action figure toys? The world would look very different if you were this small. Use your imagination to think about how things would look and create a miniature world a tiny friend could explore!



VISIT A TINY WORLD

Explore outside to collect some of the following items:

- 🌿 leaves
- 🌿 sticks
- 🌿 pebbles
- 🌿 stones
- 🌿 flowers
- 🌿 grass
- 🌿 pinecones
- 🌿 seeds

The top of an acorn could be a cute hat! A leaf could be a roof for a house or a cape for a tiny wizard, faery, or superhero! Can you make something that looks like tiny furniture—a chair or a table? A rug for the floor? What fun things can you imagine and create?



Write about what the world looks like to your tiny friend. Feel free to include a drawing of some of the creations you made with a picture of your tiny friend beside it!!

Bonus Activity:

You can also make your own fairy or wizard potion—pretend that it is like an invitation for a fairy or wizard to play with the new tiny creations you've made! All you need to create a potion is a jar, some water, and some imagination!



1. Add some water to a clear jar. You can choose to add some food coloring (just a drop). Experiment with combining colors!
2. Collect nature items to add to your fairy or wizard potion—blades of grass, tiny twigs, pebbles, flowers and flower petals.
3. Find your magic wand! While gathering your nature items for your potion, find a small stick. Hold it in your hand and...voila!
4. Gently stir your potion with your magic wand. Tighten the lid back on your jar and place it outside. Look at the world through your jar to see how the water makes things look different!

STUCK WITH A STICK

When is a stick more than just a stick? When you use your imagination!

Animals of all kinds use sticks in many different ways. Gorillas use sticks to help them walk or to see how deep water is before they get in! Elephants use branches to help swat away pesky flies. Check out the book *A Stick Until...* by Constance Anderson to see more ways that animals use sticks to help them do things.



You can do all kinds of fun things using just a stick, too! Be sure to be careful and not run or poke yourself or anyone else with your sticks, though!

Did you know you can take an entire camping trip using only your imagination and a stick or two? Go on a pretend camping trip and find all the things you can do with just a simple stick! It's a great way to get out into nature and enjoy a special getaway without going very far!

Find a decent sized stick (or several sticks) and imagine the different tools it could be on a camping trip.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- 🌿 Build a pretend campfire by placing some sticks in a pile to form a little triangle. Color some orange, red, and yellow “flames” and place in your sticks to light your fire.
- 🌿 Use a stick to mark your tent site or ask a grown up for a towel or old sheet you can put over a couple of sticks to create a small shelter
- 🌿 Make your own fishing pole. Use just a stick on its own or you can attach string and make fish to catch out of leaves!
- 🌿 What is a camping trip without hot dogs and s'mores? Use a stick to pretend to roast hot dogs and marshmallows over your pretend campfire.
- 🌿 Pretend a smaller stick is a fork or a spoon to help you stir and then eat your yummy campfire food.



How many more ways can you come up with to use a simple stick as a great toy? Can it be a microphone? A flute? How about some drumsticks or a guitar? You could even use it as a conductor's baton and direct your own imaginary band!

Can you imagine 12 more ways to use a stick for fun?

What are some other nature items that could have more uses? Draw or write in your journal about ways you can think to use sticks, rocks, leaves, and even the dirt beneath your feet!

NATURE KITCHEN

Using your imagination doesn't mean you can't get a little bit (or a lot) dirty! Become a master chef in your very own Nature Kitchen! Though you can't actually eat your creations, it's fun to imagine yourself as a chef. You can even act like you have your own cooking show and talk your audience through each step. Just be sure to give your cooking show a name and write it in your journal.



MUD PIES & MUD CUPCAKES

1. Ask an adult to help you dig up some soil and put it in a container. Add some water and use a stick as a spoon to mix it up to make mud.
2. The easiest way to make a mud pie is to just grab some mud and pat in between your hands. Pretend you are on a cooking show and explain to your audience what you're doing as you are making your pies!
3. If your mud is too wet to make into a pie, think about how you could make it thicker? You can add more soil to your "batter", you can even add some grass or torn up leaves.
4. Ask a grown up if you can use a real pie tin or plate to "serve" your pies.
5. If you have cupcake cups (silicone ones work the best), ask an adult if you can use them to make mud cupcakes. Add some mud to the cupcake cups. Now it's time to really use your imagination because no cupcake is complete without the "icing" on top! Gather some nature supplies from the yard to decorate your cupcakes!
6. If it's a hot, sunny day, you can leave your mud pies or cupcakes out in the sun to "bake." Make sure you write down what you see when you first make the cupcakes—what do they look like and how does the mud feel and smell?
7. Another fun thing you can "cook" is Mud Soup! Just add more water to your mud pie and mud cupcake batter and stir the mud again. Your soup should have more water than your "batter" so that it looks like soup! Serve in bowls with stick spoons.



What other natural dishes can you think of to make? Leaf stew? Dandelion lemonade? After you get cleaned up, write about your creations in your journal and about other imaginary meals you might want to try to make the next time you open up your nature kitchen!.