

Caring for the environment

Resource booklet for families



This resource booklet has been designed to accompany the learning from home resources designed for teachers. Each booklet covers a different learning area and is designed to be used by families in the home so they can offer play experiences that will support their child's learning in this area. It also unpacks some of the learning that will happen.

The learning outcome that links to this resource booklet is:

Learning Outcome 2: Children are connected to and contribute to their world

- Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment

The learning concepts covered in this resource are:

- How can I help the environment?
- Awareness of the natural environment
- Problem solving ways to be more sustainable

Getting out into the natural environment helps children to appreciate the natural world and become more aware of ways to protect it. It's also healthy to be out in the open air and to be active. These experiences encourage your child to take note of small things in nature, see what sparks their curiosity, and problem solve ways to help.

Families are encouraged to investigate and explore play experiences incorporating local Aboriginal history and culture, when and where appropriate.

How can I help the environment?

There are many play experiences that can be offered in the home to support children's awareness of the natural environment and ways to protect it.

Play experiences

Mini compost:

- Use a small zip lock bag and items to be composted such as veggie scraps. Chop everything up very small and add about two tablespoons of water. Close the bag and put a straw in the top for air. Put in a safe place to observe changes over time.
- Mush it around a little each day and add water if needed.
- When it looks like soil, add the compost to the garden and start again.
- Make a number of mini composts and see if there are any differences when they are placed on a sunny windowsill, in a dark cupboard, or in the fridge.

Plastics:

- Bury a few small plastic items in a tub of soil, or in a corner of the garden. Put some veggie scraps in the same place.
- Check back a few weeks later. What happened to the plastic? What about the veggie scraps?

Water:

- Find out where our water comes from and where it goes. How does it get to the tap? Where does it go after it has disappeared down the plug hole?
- Find ways to save water in the home. For example, collect water in a bucket while you wait for the shower to warm up and use it to water the plants.

Rubbish:

- Where does our rubbish go? Find out where it ends up.
- Watch ABC Kids 'Recycling' and think about what you can recycle at home abc.net.au/abckids/early-education/recycling/11970636

Re-use

- Spring clean your child's bedroom with them. Make piles of things that will be thrown away, recycled, given away or re-purposed.
- Talk about making the 'throw away' pile the smallest and why this is helpful to the environment. Can some clothes you've grown out of be given to a friend or family member? Can a broken toy be mended? Can we use this old suitcase as a planter in the garden?

Questions to support your child's learning

- I wonder why the veggie scraps have disappeared.
- What was different about the plastics and the veggie scraps when we put them in the soil?
- What do you think we can do to help?
- Why is it important to help the environment?
- How does water get here? Where did it come from? I wonder where it went.
- How else could we use this?

What will your child learn?

- Show beginning awareness of environmental issues
- To think about ways to help the environment
- Explore ways to be environmentally responsible

Environmental awareness

There are many play experiences that can be offered in the home to encourage children to develop a greater awareness of the natural environment.

Play experiences

Growing:

- Cut the bottom off a carrot, onion, beetroot, a bunch of celery and/or spinach. Place them in small bowls of water on a windowsill. Keep the water fresh.
- Watch what happens. What has changed?
- When you see some roots, try putting them in the garden. Don't forget to water them every day.

Out and about:

- Go for a walk outside. This could be in the streets of your neighbourhood, to a local park or bush space.
- Collect some interesting items such as leaves or rocks to take home and observe them carefully. Look at features such as shape, size, colour, textures, and patterns. Use a magnifying glass to look more closely. Your child could draw or write about what they saw. Display them before returning them back to nature.

In the backyard:

- Go on a nature hunt in the back yard and find things that are rough, smooth, soft and hard.
- Sort your items into piles then label them. Put them on display.

Supporting natural wildlife:

- Walk around your garden and look for living creatures that have made it their home. For example; bees, lady bugs, spiders, snails, birds, lizards.
- Talk about what they need to live such as food, shelter and water.
- Discuss what you could put into your garden to help the small creatures live.
- Research what you can do to help your backyard creatures.



Catch the wind:

- Collect things around the house that are light and likely to blow in a breeze. Some examples include strips of tissue paper, material scraps, long grasses, and fern fronds, strips of bark or cellophane.
- Make a wind sculpture from the materials and hang them somewhere outside where it will catch the wind. Describe the movement and compare how the different materials move. What will make it work better?
- Try different ways to catch the wind. For example, bundle the materials together, create longer strips or make a tube. Share the ideas with your child and take a guess at which would be the best wind catcher.

Water works:

- Make a water wall from natural and manmade materials. Collect items such as plastic pipes, bottles cut lengthways and strips of bark. Attach the pieces onto a fence so that water can run down and be collected at the bottom.
- See if you can find ways to stop the water. Talk about how the water feels and what sounds it makes. Think about how you could use the water you catch afterwards so it is not wasted.

Creative experiences:

- Draw a natural space that creatures will be happy to live in.
- Go outside and find a tree. Look at all the parts of the tree carefully. Talk about how the parts of the tree such as branches, leaves and flowers look, feel and smell. Draw or paint the tree.
- Make up a story together about a small creature who is hungry, thirsty or scared, then finds the perfect backyard. Think about what would be in the perfect backyard and include this in the story.
- Dramatise your story and think about how the creature is feeling different when it finds the perfect backyard.
- Look around at everything in the outdoor environment then draw what you see. Look at the drawings with your child and ask them to sort the pictures into natural things or manmade things.
- Create movements to mimic how your wind sculpture dances.

Questions to support your child's learning

- Let's look closely at this
- What do you notice about...?
- What do you think this creature needs?
- How can we find out?
- What do you think will happen if...?
- What things do you think belong together here?
- I wonder why... (for example; those roots grew, that tree is so tall, that lady bird is under the leaf, that bee is hovering around the lavender bush, the water always flows downwards)

What will your child learn?

- How to use wonder and curiosity to think about what they know and are familiar with in new and different ways
- Develop understanding of the connections between land, people and animals
- Confidently explore and engage with the natural environment
- Develop critical thinking skills
- Engage in early literacy and numeracy

Problem solving ways to be sustainable

When your child engages in lots of different play in the natural environment, they start to make links between those experiences. They become more aware of the environment and think about how they can help.

Play experiences

- Think about and discuss what creatures need for survival in your garden. Share ideas on what can be done to help. Create a space in your garden to support native wildlife. Make sure the creature has better shelter and better access to water and food.
- What changes could we make around the house so that less rubbish ends up in landfill? What are some ways to re-use things in different ways before throwing them away? Is there anything broken that can be fixed and re-used? How else can we get rid of kitchen scraps? What other things can we recycle?
- Explore your local environment and see if you can find any natural play spaces that would be good to spend time in? Is there a place that could use your help? For example, removing weeds, planting to help shelter lizards or provide food for bees, picking up rubbish? Who can we go to for help? For example, write a letter to the local council.
- Think about how water comes into and leaves your house. Brainstorm together different ways you could save water and write down or draw all the ideas. Make a list of three ideas and place somewhere where you will see it. Put a tick next to the idea every time someone in the house does it. Which one gets the most ticks?

Questions to support your child's learning

- How do you think we can make this even better?
- What is a good way to have less rubbish? What are some other ways?
- Let's make a plan. What do we need to think about here?
- Why is it important to save water? Create less rubbish? Reduce, re-use, recycle?
- Why do you think it's good to provide food for bees, possums, lizards?
- What are some fun things we can do outdoors?

What will your child learn?

- Develop understandings of the connections between land, people and animals
- Confidently explore and engage with physical environments
- Explore how ideas can lead to small changes
- Take action to contribute to their local environment
- Make decisions about how they can help the environment
- Share ideas and celebrate achievements
- Show growing appreciation and respect for the natural environment
- Develop an awareness of how humans have an impact on the natural environment
- Explore relationships with other living things