



52 Weeks in Nature with Kids

*A guide to getting kids outside
every week of the year*

*These weekly activities are meant to help you spend regular time in nature with children year round.
They're aligned seasonally with edible gardening and our local Ohio flora and fauna.
Also remember to check our calendar throughout the year for classes and events at the Civic Garden
Center: <https://civicgardencenter.org/calendar>. We'd love to see you out exploring our grounds!*



Building Community through Gardening, Education & Environmental Stewardship
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January

Week 1

- Start a 12-month photo collage of your yard or a local park or woods that you visit often. Take pictures on the first day of every month to see the space transform throughout the year.
- Check out our [calendar](#) periodically and see what classes are being offered throughout the growing season! You can also sign up for our [eNews](#), the Civic Gardener, to stay in the loop.



Week 2

- Make a dream garden collage from seed catalogs. Use this activity as an opportunity to learn about companion plants or the difference between annuals and perennials. Tips for acquiring free seed catalogs can be found [here](#).
- Take advantage of the fallen leaves and bare trees by bird watching. Try [this activity](#) from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that walks you through an exploration of birds.

Week 3

- Create a DIY worm bin to compost your family's fruit and vegetable scraps. The compost they create during the winter makes a great addition to your spring garden! For information about composting and how to build your own bin, check out [our page](#).
- Adopt a tree in your yard or neighborhood. Take a picture of it during each of the four seasons. Notice differences in wildlife, foliage, seeds, etc. that are on or around the tree.

Week 4

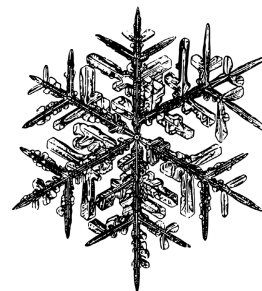
- Prepare for the spring by decorating a birdhouse. You can pick one up at your local hardware or gardening store and customize it to fit your garden's aesthetic. Reference these two resources, [safe bird houses](#) and [painted bird houses](#).



February

Week 1

- Photo collage reminder! Remember to snap a photo of your chosen outdoor scene as you follow its transformation through the year.
- Use the growing off-season to invest some time in your tools. Doing a tool inventory and cleaning or sharpening now will make completing projects in the spring easier. Let kids help in age-appropriate ways.



Week 2

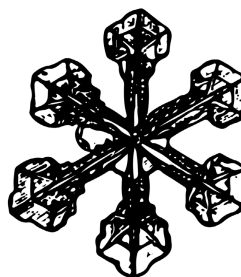
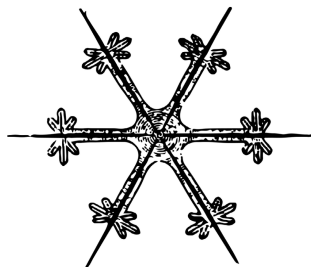
- Celebrate the cold! Complete a craft that celebrates wintertime, like this [ice suncatcher](#).
- Do you have a maple or box elder tree in your yard? Consider tapping them! Great information about how, when, and what to tap is available [here](#).

Week 3

- Take some time to learn about [what causes the seasons](#).
- Create stepping stones, an activity that helps children form positive connections to your garden even in winter. One simple method for creating stepping stones can be found [here](#).

Week 4

- Decorate pots for your garden. This is a great way to add color to your space year round.



March

Week 1

- Photo collage reminder! Remember to snap a photo of your chosen outdoor scene as you follow its transformation through the year.
- Think about starting a garden in a few weeks when temperatures are just a bit warmer. Whether you have a space in your backyard, a deck, balcony, windows, rooftop, porch or stoop, gardening can happen in all types of situations. Check out options for [container gardening](#) on our website to help inspire you to give it a try.

Week 2

- Ephemerals are flowers that only bloom for a brief time. Check out [this guide to Ohio wildflowers](#) or connect with your local park to see if there are ephemeral hikes happening near you.

Week 3

- Plant an indoor herb pot (basil, mint, thyme) and put in a windowsill.
- Plant seeds for spring crops directly outside (unless frost is expected). Get tips on watering your garden [here](#).

Week 4

- Celebrate the [Spring Equinox](#): Read a story outdoors, create a graph of the different flower characteristics, or act out the position of the sun and Earth during spring.
- Record plant growth. Survey the garden. Is there anything else you need for a successful spring season? Reach out to us with your questions and ideas.

Week 5

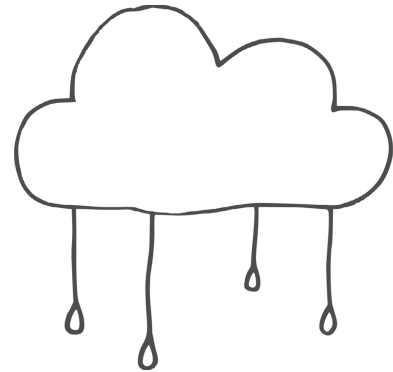
- Look for signs of the spring season! Record the weather for the week to find patterns. This is a great way to use age-appropriate math, science and critical thinking skills.



April

Week 1

- Photo collage reminder! Remember to snap a photo of your chosen outdoor scene as you follow its transformation through the year.
- Don't forget to take a picture of your adopted tree! Note any changes from your January photo.



Week 2

- Place a rain gauge in an open area of your garden and teach your child how to read it. Create a log to track how much rain you get throughout the season. This will help you gauge how much additional water your garden needs.
- Rain chains are another great way to redirect and collect rainwater. They can be made with almost anything! Working similar to a gutter downspout, water flows down them and can be collected in buckets or rain barrels. Collected rainwater is great for plants, both indoors and outdoors! [Here](#) are some ideas to get you started.

Week 3

- Consider adding a compost system or dividing your vermicompost bin. Extra worm castings or processed compost can be added to your garden!
- Do a kitchen taste test! Spend some time meandering the grocery store or local market looking for new fruits or vegetables you've never tried before. Do some research about your finds, sample them together, then reflect with [this worksheet](#)!

Week 4

- Look for a kid-friendly volunteer opportunity or event in a local park or forest for Earth Day. You can read more about the history of Earth Day [here](#).



May

Week 1

- Photo collage reminder! Remember to snap a photo of your chosen outdoor scene as you follow its transformation through the year.
- Water your garden beds. Check the rain gauge to see how much rain has fallen since you last visited the garden. Remember, vegetables need about an inch of water per week!
- Participate in the “[No Mow May](#)” and don’t mow all or part of your lawn for the month of May. Have your child color a the “No Mow May” sign for your yard.

Week 2

- Plant your summer garden! Consider crops like peppers, tomatoes, beans, summer squash, cucumbers, and leafy greens. Cherry tomatoes in interesting colors are especially popular with kids.
- Consider incorporating a bean fort into your garden! This is a great way to support your beans and create a fun hiding spot for kids. Check out [this](#) resource on how to construct it.

Week 3

- Start a flower journal. Spend an hour sitting outside with your child drawing and coloring flowers you see in your garden or local park. See if you can identify the flowers you find in a guide book or online.

Week 4

- Harvest a spring salad. Bring scissors and a bowl with you to the garden. Show your child what to harvest and how. Then head inside and make a dressing! For ideas on creating your own salad dressing, click [here](#).

Week 5

- Investigate food webs. Look for signs of interactions between members of the garden food web. How is everything connected? Check out [this](#) activity.



June

Week 1

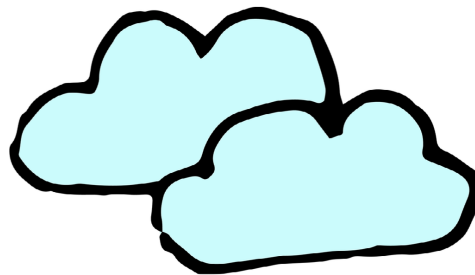
- Photo collage reminder! Remember to snap a photo of your chosen outdoor scene as you follow its transformation through the year.
- Be grateful for a month of not mowing your lawn by enjoying the fireflies in your backyard. Count how many you see in a minute. Does that number change as it gets darker?

Week 2

- Harvest basil, mint or thyme from your windowsill pot (or find some at a local farmer's market) and mix it with lemonade. Freeze your herbed lemonade to make popsicles!

Week 3

- Cloud watching and meditating is a great way to take a break in our hectic lives. [This](#) resource has a written meditation for kids but works for all ages. After the meditation, you and your child can spend time either drawing the clouds you see or writing in a journal about your experience.



Week 4

- Find an area in your yard or local park that has a lot of flowers. Take five minutes to sit and count how many different pollinators you see. Can you identify any of them?



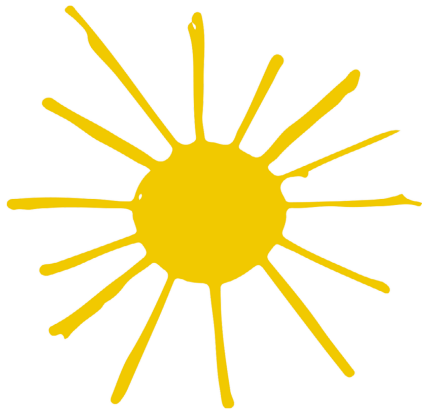
July

Week 1

- Photo collage reminder! Remember to snap a photo of your chosen outdoor scene as you follow its transformation through the year.
- Plant seeds for sunflowers for some fall blooms. Pick a variety that matures in 60 to 75 days to ensure there is enough time before the weather will get too cold. You'll enjoy the happy flowers and so will many pollinators at that time of year. Just be sure that you don't forget to keep the seeds moist in the soil, since July can be such a hot month.

Week 2

- Go on a [Five Senses Scavenger Hunt](#).



Week 3

- Remember to take a picture of your adopted tree! Note any changes from your photo from April.
- Harness the power of the sun for a fun craft. Try making [nature sun prints](#), either with simple materials you might already have around like construction paper and plastic wrap or with Sun Art or SunPrint Kit paper available from craft stores. For both ways, collect some natural items preferably flat ones and arrange them on the paper. Leave them in the sun and come back to see the print you created.

Week 4

- Nature sounds: Sit quietly for three minutes. How many different animal or insect sounds can you hear? Can you identify any of them (frogs, crickets, cicadas, birds...)?
- Host a summer potluck! Harvest from your summer garden and invite friends to share in your bounty.



August

Week 1

- Photo collage reminder! Remember to snap a photo of your chosen outdoor scene as you follow its transformation through the year.
- Make sun tea with herbs from the garden or farmer's market like mint, lemon balm, lavender. [Here](#) are some simple directions to follow.

Week 2

- Plant your fall garden. Crops like lettuce, spinach, kale, Swiss chard, mustard greens and carrots can be directly seeded into the soil. Pay close attention to keeping them watered, since there are can still be many hot days. Once established, the leafy greens will be ready for multiple fall harvests and your carrots can be enjoyed beyond the first frost (usually around mid October in our region).



Week 3

- Pollinators are plentiful in the late summer. Get outside for a scavenger hunt to see how many different types of pollinators you can spot. [Here](#) is one we made for the grounds at the Civic Garden Center.

Week 4

- Flower pounding and flower pressing are great ways to track what's in bloom. For flower pounding, you just need a piece of fabric and a hammer to create a work of art; [this site](#) gives basic instructions. To press flowers, you can buy a flower press or simply put flowers on parchment paper between pages of heavy books. Check on your flowers after a week.

Week 5

- Hot summer days are a great time for water play! Whether you head to the man-made water feature at your local park or find a natural one, kids will enjoy experimenting with sink or float, finding fossils and looking for plants and animals that live there. Be sure to respect the rules of the park or nature preserve since natural bodies of water can be heavily impacted by human activities.



September

Week 1

- Photo collage reminder! Remember to snap a photo of your chosen outdoor scene as you follow its transformation through the year.
- Practice weed identification. Record leaf characteristics and have a weed-pulling competition to see who can gather the most! Add the weeds to the compost pile, if you have one. Check out [this](#) Ohio State University resource for more information on weed identification.
- Record plant growth. Measure the stems and leaves of the same plant each week, then create a graph to show the growth over time.

Week 2

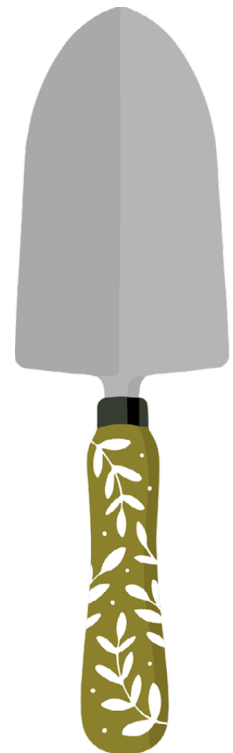
- Head out for a nature walk with a [journey stick](#) especially for kids who enjoy collecting things.

Week 3

- Dig in your compost pile and [bug hunt](#). If you don't have a compost pile, you can also find many of the same critters under rocks and logs.
- Plant a cover crop in garden beds you aren't using to grow fall crops. These specifically selected seeds will sprout and grow as a green carpet covering your garden soil, adding nutrients, retaining moisture, holding it in place and supporting all the microbiology of your soil through the winter. In the spring, you can cut it back or turn it into the soil to make room for spring crops.

Week 4

- As native plants go to seed, collect some and make [seed balls](#). Spread them in an area you'd like to see blossom into a new garden to support local wildlife.
- Create a mud kitchen for mud play! It can be as simple as some thrifted pots, pans, bowls and utensils. Adding a table (or a stump at table height) can define the space for the activity.



October

Week 1

- Photo collage reminder! Remember to snap a photo of your chosen outdoor scene as you follow its transformation through the year.
- Save seeds from perennials, annuals and summer vegetables. Have fun decorating seed packages and sharing them with friends and family.



Week 2

- Search for caterpillars in the garden and on trees and shrubs. You may come across the Woollybear caterpillar, which some people say can help predict what the winter weather will be like.
- While you're raking leaves that have fallen, leave some piles or bags of them in your yard to create habitat for overwintering insects such as moths, swallowtail butterflies and fireflies. You'll be glad you did come summertime!



Week 3

- Plant garlic for next summer's harvest. Put it down the middle of your beds where it can be harder for those with shorter arms to reach. That way, there will be plenty of room for spring crops, which will need more frequent attention, in easier-to-reach spots.

Week 4

- Remember to take a picture of your adopted tree! Note any changes from your photo from July. Collage your 4 photos together and use it to see the differences the 4 seasons have on your tree.
- Wondering what to do with your pumpkins after Halloween has passed? Some ideas: Add them to your compost pile and watch them decompose (take daily pictures). Give them to someone with pumpkin-eating chickens! Throw some birdseed into them and turn them into bird feeders, or use them as a planter and plant a bean seed in them. Or head to Cincinnati Parks annual pumpkin chuck!



November

Week 1

- Photo collage reminder! Remember to snap a photo of your chosen outdoor scene as you follow its transformation through the year.
- Plant an amaryllis bulb indoors. Most take 6-8 weeks to bloom.

Week 2

- Leaf rubbings are a great way to take home a part of the forest with you without actually taking the leaves! Collect some dry leaves and arrange them on a flat surface. Cover them with a piece of paper, ideally using a clipboard. Finally, gently rub back and forth over the leaf with a crayon and watch the leaf appear! These make great greeting cards or compile them into a book or field guide for your next adventure.

Week 3

- Plant spring bulbs such as daffodils, tulips, hyacinths, irises and crocuses now to have bright blooms in April, May and June. The bulbs you plant now will continue to bloom for years to come.

Week 4

- As the growing season winds down, enjoy a harvest celebration. Include fall crops that are still growing as well as the end of your summer crops that you may have stored away, such as winter squash, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, dried beans and herbs.



December



Week 1

- Photo collage reminder! Remember to snap one last photo of your chosen outdoor scene, then display and enjoy the complete collage!
- Make gifts for the animals, like these [simple bird feeders](#). You'll also be upcycling materials, which is a great way to teach children about the importance of reusing.

Week 2

- Add color to your garden. This is a fun way to inspire interest and pride in the garden during the gloomy winter months. Hang ornaments, scarves and ribbons created by your family from natural products.

Week 3

- Celebrate the Winter Solstice: Make an [upcycled lantern](#) with a tin can or glass jar and tissue paper, have an outdoor fire, or go on a “night hike” (a walk in in the evening with a flashlight or headlamp).

Week 4

- When temperatures drop below freezing, create [colorful ice sculptures](#) by adding food coloring to water in various sized containers and setting them outside. Once the water freezes, you can stack and arrange the colorful shapes in endless ways.

Week 5

- Looking a little more closely at nature in the winter can reveal a lot of beauty that otherwise might go unnoticed. Encourage careful observation by challenging kids to go on a winter color hunt. Give them several different paint color swatches to match with something natural they see outside. You could also give them a clipboard with a blank sheet of paper and a few colored pencils or crayons and have them draw what they find.

