

Family Fun Exploration in the Evergreen Arboretum

Adapted from Washington Park Arboretum Family Activities

The Three Ds: Dead, Down, & Detached: A Sustainable Way to Harvest from Nature



Overview

In this adventure, we will sustainably collect items to build a fairy house!

Every single part of plant has an important job to do, so we want to leave living plants in the Arboretum as they are. But you can still collect fun nature items from the Arboretum by looking for items that are **dead, down, and detached**.

Gear: Basket or bag (optional)

1. **Dead.** We want to find items that are not living. Talk with your adult about items that are dead/not living that humans should not touch. Working with your adult, along the main path to the Backyard Garden and point out 5 things that are not living. What did you find?
2. **Down.** Down means items that are down on the ground. Walking past the Horizontal Garden and Nativar Garden, point out 5 things that you see down on the ground. What did you find?
3. **Detached.** Detached means not connected to anything else. Talk to your adult about which items are safe to collect. Walking along the Native Plant Walk, collect 5-10 items that are dead, down, AND detached. You can use your bag or basket, or just carry as many items in your hands as you can hold.

Time to play with what you have collected! Take your collected items to the top of the Viewing Mound by the Fibonacci water feature, use your collected items to build a tiny house designed for a tree fairy. Listen to the water and be creative. Share your artwork with your adult. After you're finished, take down your construction so that other people and animals can reuse the materials. What materials exist where you live that you could use to build? How do animals use items that are dead, down, and detached?

Nature's Colors



Overview

In this adventure, we will use colors from the Arboretum to create a work of art! Did you know that people have been using natural materials like plants to make dyes for thousands of years? What colors are available here at the Arboretum?

Gear: White Paper (you can use the back of this sheet!) Camera (optional)

1. What colors are available in different areas of the Arboretum? Let's go on a color hunt along the Master Gardener Garden- what kind of colors do you find? Use a camera to take photos of at least 3 different colors you notice. Don't have a camera? Frame the shot with your hands and take a "mental snapshot"!
2. Once you have taken your three photos (or mental snapshots), let's get harvesting! Collect 5 different items from along the trail that you want to turn into paint. Items might include: grass, leaves, mud, flower petals, fruit, etc. Consider how you might break down the item. Can you crush it easily with your hands? Do you need some rocks to help smush it up? Talk to your adult about which items are safe to collect, and would be least damaging to the plants at the Arboretum. Use the Three Ds activity for some ideas!
3. Crush up the materials using your hands or some rocks and apply them directly to the paper by smearing them across it. Make sure you're smushing them enough to release any liquids that may be inside of them.
4. Create a work of art using your new dyes! How do the colors look different on your paper than they did before you harvested them? Share your artwork with your adult! What materials exist where you live that could be used to paint?

Seed Exploration



Overview

In this fall adventure, we will explore a variety of seeds covering the park! What does every plant start as?

Gear: Plate, tray, or basket (optional) - Magnifying glass (optional)

1. There are so many different seeds here at the Arboretum. How many can you find? Head over to Japanese Maple Grove to start your seed hunt!
2. Decide how long you would like to search for seeds - 5 minutes? 10 minutes? Set a timer, or search until you feel done. Try to find as many different types of seeds as possible. Not sure if it's a seed? Ask your adult for their opinion! Talk to your adult about which items are safe to collect, and only collect seeds that have already fallen on the ground. Use the Three Ds activity for more helpful hints about harvesting from the Arboretum!
3. Now, let's take a closer look. Place all the seeds your group found into a container, or find a clear space on the ground to place your stash. Using your magnifying glass, take a really close look at the seeds you found. What do you notice about them? Observe their colors, textures, shapes, and more. What do you wonder about your seeds? Sort the seeds into groups with similarities. Seeds are all around us. What do these seeds remind you of?
4. Think like a scientist! Scientists gather information to answer questions that they have about the world. Why do you think different types of seeds look different? What can the appearance of these seeds tell you about them? Use the seeds you gathered to provide evidence for your ideas. Why do some seeds have spikes, while others have wings, or super hard shells? Talk with your adult about what functions you think those special qualities (adaptations) might serve, and why they're important for the seed. What special qualities help you live in your community?

Super Stewards



Overview

In this adventure, we'll explore some of the signs of human presence in the park and discover how we can be a super park steward! The Arboretum is a really fun place for humans to visit.

Gear: Writing utensil and Camera (optional)

1. Let's go explore! Start walking from the front entrance at the front blue pillars. What things do you see around the path that were made or put there by humans? HINTS: a. This was built by humans to protect the grass and other plants from being stepped on: _____ b. This was built so that humans could safely walk up to the Viewing Mound and not fall or step into the Alpine Rock Garden _____ c. This is a place for humans to sit so that they don't accidentally sit on a fragile plant: _____ What other evidence can you find that humans have been to this park?
2. Ready for a challenge? Spell out your name, then try to find something made or put in the park by humans that starts with each letter of your name. For example: **SAM**; S - Sidewalks, A - Automobiles, M – Maps. The Arboretum features plant species from all over the region. How did these plants get here? In what ways have humans shaped the “natural” areas of the park?
3. Not all human presence is great for the park. What are some things you see around the park that might be hurting the plants or animals that live here? What actions can you take to help the park?
4. Stewards are people who take care of things. How can you be a good steward of this park? How do you help take care of your home? Come up with three things you can do to help take care of this space.

Tiny Trek



Overview

In this adventure, we will go on the world's tiniest trek to see what things we might be overlooking along the trail! Big hikes are fun, but there's more hanging out on the ground than you might imagine.

Gear: Measuring tape (optional) Magnifying glass (optional)

1. Pick a place in the Arboretum that's slightly off the beaten path. Try a mulchy area in the Japanese Maple Grove, or a shady spot in the grassy area of the Backyard Garden. Measure out about 3 feet on the ground. This is your new trail. If you don't have a tape measure, use the full length of your adult's arm.
2. Let's get down to a bug's eye view. Kneeling down at one end of your trail, use your fingers to comb through the grass, mulch, leaves, etc. What is something you see that you didn't expect? Continue along your trail, looking carefully to notice as many things as possible.
3. Use your magnifying glass to take a closer look. What living things made their home on this trail? What is the most unique shape that you found?
4. How did your other senses help you explore? Describe something you heard, something you felt, and something you smelled. What tiny things might you be overlooking near your front door?

Favorite Colors



Overview

You have a favorite color. Do you think birds and insects do too? Did you know that Hummingbirds are attracted to red and pink flowers while Goldfinches prefer yellow flowers. Color as well as flower shape will attract birds and help in the transfer of pollen from flower to flower by birds and insects. While most bright colors are attractive to birds, the color white can signal alarm, danger, and aggression to some birds. Although white flowers may not be interesting to birds, they do attract moths. After dark, moths and bats take over the night shift for pollination. Plants with pale or white flowers, heavy with fragrance and lots of nectar, attract these pollinating insects.

POLLINATION is the process by which pollen grains from an anther, the male portion of a flower, are transferred to a female part in the flower, known as the stigma. Once pollinated, the plant makes fruit. Birds and insects help the pollination process.

Gear – Before your walk in the Arboretum, visit a paint store to get a handful of free paint chip samples. Bring crayons, white paper and stiff board to draw on- camera (optional)

1. Let's go on a color hunt along the Master Gardener Garden. Use the paint chips to match colors as you walk. How close is the color on the paint chip to the matching plants? Is it brighter, duller, warmer or cooler? Can you find other flowers with similar colors? What's your favorite color? Can you find flowers that a hummingbird, a goldfinch or a moth would be attracted to? Use your camera to take photos of at least 3 different flowers you like. Don't have a camera? Frame the shot with your hands to take a "mental snapshot"! Don't have color chips samples? Make your own with crayons on white paper.
2. Find a spot in the Arboretum where you can sit and draw. Use your photo, your mental snapshot or sit right where the flower is to draw a picture. Share your artwork with your adult!

Take it home: What flowers grow where you live that would attract birds or insects? What flowers would you like to grow? Is there a place near where you live where you could plant a flower that would attract a bird or insect, maybe in a pot or the ground?