

Environmental Arts



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Name of activity

Precious Things



Purpose

This activity encourages development of observational and descriptive skills.

Materials Required

Selection of "precious" items e.g. shells, fir cones, pebbles.

Space Required

Any space.

Instructions

Ask each child to select a "precious" item from the collection, or they can go and choose an item from the surroundings.

Ask the children to study their precious thing very carefully, noting its shape, colour, markings etc.

After a few minutes, ask each child to find a partner. Swap "precious things" and, while keeping the items hidden, ask questions of each other: What colour is it? What shape is it? How many ridges are there?

Comments

Discuss the importance of taking time to look at things in detail to notice beautiful details we might otherwise miss!

Name of activity

Acrostic Poems



Purpose

Can be used in conjunction with Precious Things or as a separate activity. This activity encourages development of observational and descriptive skills.

Materials Required

Selection of "precious" items e.g. shells, fir cones, pebbles.
Small pieces of card and pencils.

Space Required

Any space.

Instructions

Ask each child to select a "precious" item from the collection, or they can go and choose an item from the surroundings.

Ask the children to write the letters which spell their item down the left side of the card.

Think of a good descriptive word for your precious thing to begin with each letter on the left e.g.

Alive
Colourful
Oval
Resting
Nestling

Comments

A good starter activity which can be developed back at school.

Environmental Arts



Name of activity

Mirrors and Trees

Purpose



To sharpen observational skills by using an unfamiliar perspective.

Materials Required

A selection of small mirrors. {Tape any potentially sharp edges or use plastic mirrors.}

Space Required

Make sure there are no obstacles in the vicinity of the tree.

Instructions

Outdoor space beneath a tree - ideally with spreading branches.

Choose a tree with plenty of space beneath it and with branches which spread outwards as far as possible.

The children need to stand around the tree with their backs to the trunk. Ask them to hold a mirror beneath their chin and to move it until they can choose a branch stretching in front of them. Then, using the mirror as their guide, they must aim to walk "along" the branch like a tightrope, without looking up!

Another option is to work in the same way but moving sideways "jumping" from branch to branch.

Comments

Discuss how everyone felt when they could only use a reflection to guide them.

Name of activity

Sound Maps

Adapted from Jospeh Cornell

Purpose



Materials Required

To focus on what's going on around us and to develop listening skills.

Space Required

Circles of card, pencils.

Instructions

Outdoor space ideally but can be carried out anywhere.

Explain how in our busy lives we rarely stop and listen to what's going on around us.

Give each child a "disk" on which they are going to "record" the sounds around them.

Ask each child to find a space away from others.

At the centre of the disk the child needs to add themselves (as a drawing or a symbol). Then they stand and listen and decide which sounds are coming from which direction. Mark the location of the sound on the disk according to its position. The marks can be drawings of the actual thing making the sound (e.g. bird) or a representation of the sound it makes in words or symbols.

Comments

Finish the activity by counting how many sounds were heard or ask for suggestions of sounds which are different to those heard at school.

Name of activity

Framing nature



Purpose

These activities encourages development of observational skills.

Materials Required

Small card frames made as "slides" to fold in middle.

Collection of old picture frames of varying sizes (find at jumble sales and charity shops).

Space Required

Outdoor space - works well in a woodland.

Instructions

1. Give each child a small "slide" and ask them to find a leaf which has been changed in some way by an insect . Place the leaf inside the slide, fold over and hold it up to the sky to see how different it looks, what patterns the insect has made, what colours are revealed.
2. Ask each child to select a picture frame and then to find something in the natural surroundings to frame - it might be a view, or something on the ground. Move the frame to create an interesting composition.

Comments

Finish the activity by touring the "gallery" to see each other's works of art and nature.

Name of activity

Tree Faces



Purpose

This activity encourages development of observational and creative skills.

Materials Required

Balls of clay.

Space Required

Outdoor space with trees.

Instructions

Ask each child to find walk around and look closely at the trees. Can they see anything on the trunks that resemble parts of faces? Could that lumpy bit be a nose? Is that a man's beard?

Using the clay, build up a face around part of the tree. Use natural materials {feathers, leaves etc) to add features.

Comments

Encourage a tour of the trees to find the faces!

This activity can be extended here or back at school by creating stories about the creatures the faces belong to.

Faces can be left to decay naturally unless you need to re-use the clay or if the setting is used on a regular basis for similar activities.

Name of activity

Boggart sculptures



Purpose

This activity encourages use of the imagination.

Materials Required

Clay, natural materials from surroundings.

Space Required

Outdoor space - works well in a woodland.

Instructions

Explain how in English folklore, a boggart (or bogart) is a household spirit which causes mischief.

Give each child a lump of clay with which to create their own boggart figure. This can take any shape, can fly, crawl, hop; can live in branches or under the ground, at the base of trees.

Ask each child to find natural materials to add features to their boggart - leaves, twigs pebbles etc.

Comments

Finish the activity by coming together in a circle to reveal the boggart collection!

This activity can be extended by creating stories about the boggarts.

Name of activity

Charcoal and Mud Drawing



Purpose

This activity encourages development of observational and creative skills.

Materials Required

Selection of card or canvas cut offs, pieces of string, drawing charcoal.

Space Required

Any outdoor space.

Instructions

Ask each child to select what they wish to draw on - card or canvas.

Offer charcoal for drawing and suggest introduction of colour using natural materials only: mud, grass rubbed on to extract juices etc.

Suggest the children find a special place or object to draw. They can decide to draw just a detail of a gate or a whole landscape.

Some may wish to draw a panoramic view: this can be achieved by using a horizontal piece of canvas secured to a piece of card. As each section of the panorama is completed, the canvas can be moved along and the next section drawn.

Comments

Come together at the end and admire each other's work! See what beautiful creations can emerge from a limited palette of colours

Name of activity

Developing Larger Art Works



Purpose

This activity encourages use of the imagination.

Materials Required

Clay, clay slip, natural materials from surroundings.

Space Required

Outdoor space - works well in a woodland.

Instructions

Following on from other activities which stimulate the imagination {Boggart Sculptures, Tree Faces etc) ask the children to choose to develop one of these activities further. They can make homes for the boggarts; add more to their Tree Faces; work together or individually on an abstract piece of art.

Clay slip can be used to "paint" onto the trees to add a further dimension.

Comments

Finish the activity by taking a tour of the outdoor gallery.

Name of activity

Journey Sticks



Purpose

This activity encourages development of observational and creative skills.

Materials Required

Small balls of wool.

Space Required

Outdoor space.

Instructions

Ask each child to find a good stick which will be the basis for a record of their journey through the field/wood/farm etc.

Give each child a small ball of coloured wool. As they continue along their journey, they collect items of interest e.g. leaves, sheep's wool, twigs etc and each is bound tightly to the stick to make a record of the journey.

Comments

A journey stick is personal to each child but you can encourage children to share their memories of the journey with reference to the special things they have collected. This can be a follow up activity back at school.

Name of activity

Weaving



Purpose

This activity encourages development of observational and creative skills.

Materials Required

Small hand held "looms" made from card and wool..

Space Required

Outdoor space.

Instructions

A variation on journey sticks or on colour collections.

Give each child a small weaving loom. As they continue along their journey, they collect items of interest e.g. leaves, sheep's wool, etc and each is woven onto the loom to make a record of the journey. Alternatively, the loom can be used for the collection of colours (see Colour Collections)

Comments

The loom encourages children to develop their own piece of art with personally chosen items to create an individual weaving.

Name of activity

Colour Collections

Purpose

This activity encourages development of observational skills.

Materials Required

Pieces of card with strip of double sided sticky tape.

Space Required

Any outdoor space.

Instructions

Give each child a piece of card with the sticky strip revealed.

Ask the children to collect natural colour samples onto their card (leaves, stems, pebbles) You can suggest one colour (e.g. green, brown) so that they must find examples of different shades, or they can make a collection of as many different colours as possible.

Comments

Form a circle at the end to share findings and talk about all the different colours in nature.



Environmental Artists

Be inspired! Use the work of these artists or share examples with the children.

Richard Long www.richardlong.org

Andy Goldsworthy www.goldsworthy.cc.gla.ac.uk

Chris Drury www.chrisdrury.co.uk

George Dombek www.georgedombek.com

Judith Belzar www.judithbelzer.com