

MUSIK
GARTEN®

Nature Trail



Nature Trail is a supplement to the publication, *The Cycle of Seasons*.

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MUSIKGARTEN

NATURE TRAIL

SUMMER

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This publication is a supplement to *The Cycle of Seasons: A Musical Celebration of the Year for Young Children* (Musikgarten, 1994); activity and recording references in the lesson suggestions are from this publication.

Musikgarten Nature Trail for Summer provides materials to amplify the nature encounter of the *Summer Cycle of Seasons* activities. The program enables you to offer children and families a one-week nature and music experience. The primary purpose of the program is to enjoy being in the natural environment, feeling comfortable in it and experiencing its mystery and wonder.

Musikgarten Nature Trail is for children 4 to 7 years of age. We recommend that children be at least 4 years of age when the class starts. For these outdoor activities it is advisable to have an assistant to help you. Consider inviting a teenage assistant, to give him/her an opportunity to become involved with young children.

Musikgarten Nature Trail Summer Cycle includes

Teacher's Guide with Immersion Activities, Nature Gifts and Lesson Plans

Summer Tape

Accessories for Outdoor Exploration: Subscope, Child's Magnifying Glass, Cricket Clicker

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The Institute for Earth Education

We are indebted to the Institute for Earth Education for their cooperation in allowing us to adapt some of their ideas. The Institute's primary mission is to develop earth education programs for young people to learn to live lightly and harmoniously on the Earth. The programs are being used in nature centers and schools across the USA and Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia and Japan.

The Institute was founded by Steve Van Matre. Earth Education immerses learners in ecological systems; the programs are highly enjoyable and create unforgettable experiences for various ages. The Institute has an extensive catalog of publications and materials, sponsors training sessions across the continent and welcomes members. Membership entitles you to the journal *Talking Leaves* twice a year.

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The Institute for Earth Education

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Music and Nature - a natural partnership

When music and nature are brought together, young children have the opportunity to grow and develop into whole persons in an interactive environment.

Music and nature serve the young child's primary mode of learning - the sensory-motor process. Music engages the ear through listening, vocalizing and moving, and nature furnishes a living exploratory environment which engages all the senses - particularly hearing, touch and sight, confirmed through movement.

Sensory-motor exploration forms, informs and sustains the child's intellectual life. Research shows that when music, movement, nature and language are integrated in a holistic approach, the benefits are incalculable physically, emotionally, intellectually and socially.

The music and nature experience is a matter of feeling and relating to ourselves and others — human as well as other-than-human beings. Humans, and young children in particular, have an innate tendency to make these vital connections with other living forms in the process of assimilating, understanding and integrating their world. The natural world provides an ever-present context, an envelope which enfolds all life. It has, therefore, unique gifts to offer which no indoor environment can match.

In the outdoors children have the opportunity to feel the warmth of the sun, the coolness of shade and the touch of the wind. Watching busy ants or picking a dandelion bouquet is a wholesome, memorable experience. It is fun for children to be playful and energetic in the open air, while discovering deeper dimensions in the commonplace. Those deeper dimensions cannot be taught - only experienced and absorbed on a level of feeling relationship.

Music and nature are embedded in a sonic universe, and provide a comprehensive mutually enhancing environment to stimulate and sustain sensory-motor learning. The experience of sound in wild places is less polluted by extraneous noise than in urban areas, heightening awareness of its subtle nuances. The ability to discriminate sounds is a determining faculty in language acquisition and formation.

In the early years the child meets the world with a *beginner's mind*, urged by the sustaining energy of life itself, possessing the power to direct itself. No other stage of development will be as creative as the first six years of life. The creation and formation of the child's personality depends on a process of exchange from *within* to *without* in the work of self-construction. By offering an integrated music and nature environment, the adult presents a nurturing environment for all learning. Education is not simply a matter of imparting knowledge. Education has to support human development as a help to life and wholeness which is a continuous process, involving the educator and the pupil in a reciprocal exchange. The living world is a primary source of engagement and wonder for the young child and music liberates his or her truly human response to it.

The living sensory-motor pathways to learning are absolutely vital to all later learning and successful cognitive functioning. The child's way of learning is to receive, absorb, and then integrate the experience. The child builds experience into concepts and networks of understanding.

Music and movement have always expressed human experience. By offering the children the experience of music and nature together, you make it possible for them to communicate and express their feelings and understanding. Fostering such a relationship prepares the children for a deep understanding of planetary functions and their interrelationships with all life forms.

Day 1: TREES

Materials:

Rhythm Sticks	Magnifying Glasses
Crayons	Paper (3 sheets per child)
Snack	Nature Mystery Bag
<i>Sounds of Nature Recording</i>	Listening Cards: Mocking Bird,
Resonator Bars: d', a'	Cicada, Green Frog and Chipmunk

1. Making Music

		Page	Card
<i>Clap, Clap, Clap</i>	Greeting Song with "Hello" verse for each child	16	18
<i>Jim Along Josie</i>	Steady Beat	20	22
Add Rhythm Sticks	Explore the instrument		
Patterns	Rhythm, Tonal		
<i>Somebody's Knocking</i>	Drums	136	178
<i>Underneath the Willow Tree</i>	Singing Game	50	69

- Extend the activity by asking children about trees. What kind of trees do they know: tall trees, fat trees, oak, maple, etc.
- Sing and dance a verse for each of their suggestions.

2. Going Outside

Magic Elbows (Immersion Activity)

- Introduce the outside space to the children by making sure you define the boundaries.
- Tell the children that walking is the way to move around outside when we go exploring.
- Show the children how to use their *Magic Elbows*. Try this indoors before going out, so that it functions well in the outdoor environment.

Tree Friends (Immersion Activity)

- Direct attention to the trees in the environment and announce that you are going to introduce them to some tree friends.
- Pick a tree and greet your friend by giving it a big hug and asking how it is today. Stroke the bark with your whole hand. Introduce the children to the tree saying. "These are my friends I want you to meet." Invite the children to meet your tree friend.
- Follow with suggestions offered in *Tree Friends*.
- Invite the children to join hands in a circle around the tree and then to lay down in their place with their feet toward the tree trunk. Ask them to close their eyes and place their arms by their sides.
- Request the children to make themselves very quiet and listen to their new friend. Can they hear what the tree is saying? Listen.
- After a minute or two, ask the children to sit up and join you in a circle under the tree.
- "What did your new friend say? Would you like to share that with us?" Always share your own experience.
- Suggest to the children to thank their new friend in any way they wish.

Use of the magnifying glass

- If possible, have one magnifying glass for each child in a basket. (A small magnifying glass with a string attached so the child can hang it around the neck works well.)
- Show the children how to hold the glass, explaining that the glass makes things larger and easier to see.
- Invite the children to take a few minutes to experiment. They may need some guidance, so allow them to look at fingers or something else close at hand.
- Direct the children to look at the tree bark with the magnifying glass and touch the bark again. "What do you see? How does it feel?"
- Show the children how to place the magnifiers back in the basket carefully (to avoid scratching them).

Conclusion

- Close your outdoor time by making a circle around one of the trees. Sing and dance to *Underneath the (name of your tree) Tree*. Do this activity around several individual trees in your environment.

3. Listening and Moving

Meadow Listening Game: Mocking Bird, Chipmunk, Cicada, Green Frog

- Show the children the pictures for the listening game *Meadow*: Mocking Bird, Chipmunk, Cicada, and Green Frog. Talk about each of the animals.
- Listen to the voice of each animal.

Chipmunk (or *Trees*)

- Read Aileen Fisher's poem *Chipmunk* (Page 112, Card 142b, use the picture card) or *Trees* (Page 122, Card 161a).
- Ask the children if they have seen a chipmunk. Can they tell you about it.
- Talk about its size, color, what it eats and where it lives. You may want to tell them about the chipmunk storing its food in an underground burrow, sleeping through the winter and getting up from time to time to snack on its store of nuts and seeds. The chipmunk does not hibernate as the groundhog does. Their burrows have many entrances and exits.

Homecoming (Story, text at the end of this lesson)

- Tell the story and invite the children to act it out.

4. Nature Gifts

- Talk to the children about trees. Before doing the bark rubbing do a walk-about of your environment visiting "our tree friends."

Bark Rubbing (Nature Gifts)

- Draw a picture of a tree.

Bird Talk (Page 111, Card 140a)

- Talk with the children about the robin and the blue jay.

- Read the poem.
- The children may wish to add birds to their drawing.

Snack Time

5. Going Outside

Magic Elbows (Immersion Activity)

A Ribbon of Color (Immersion Activity)

Nature Mystery Bag (Adaptation of Sensory Game, Page 146, Card 191a)

- Use a pretty drawstring bag approximately 6' x 6', preferably a washable fabric. A small elasticized cuff can be sewn around the opening of the bag instead of a drawstring.
- Collect about 6 contrasting nature objects *with the children*. Place them in the bag.
- Game
 - Make a circle of children.
 - Reach into the bag feeling an object, saying what you think it might be.
 - Withdraw the object from the bag and visually affirm your identification. Place the object in front of you.
- Give each of the children a chance to identify an object.
- If you hold the bag, you will be able to encourage identification of the object BEFORE withdrawing it.

6. Making Music

		Page	Card
<i>Walk Along, John</i>	Traveling Movement	37	51
<i>Kumbaya</i>	Resonator Bars (d', a')	139	180
<i>Billy, Billy</i> (with parents, if possible)	Singing Game	41	56

Homecoming

Down by the pond grew a willow tree, very large and very old. The willow tree had grown by the pond for many seasons, and every year its branches welcomed nesting birds.

As soon as the sun warmed the air, a cicada began his buzzing while sitting on the tree trunk, and a chipmunk scooted out of her burrow in the tree roots to find breakfast. A shy green frog hopped about in the cool shade of the old tree, and when it got too hot, he went for a refreshing dip in the pond. Everything should have been perfect — but no — the old tree seemed sad and nobody could figure out why. Even the wind heard its friend breathe heavily as it passed by, and thought it was time to see what was the matter.

So the wind said to the tree: "You seem sad, old friend. Is there something we can do to help? All your friends, especially cicada, chipmunk, and green frog, are worried about you."

The great tree heaved a sigh that shook its whole trunk. Then it said, "My dear friend, the mockingbird, has not returned this summer for the first time ever. I appreciate my friend cicada's buzzing and chipmunk's chattering and green frog's gurgling, but I sorely miss the wonderful singing of the mockingbird who made me her home. I fear she has

come to harm." Once again, the willow tree sighed deeply.

"That is a troubling matter, friend, so let us make inquiries without delay. In the meantime, cheer up!", said the wind.

So the wind blew away on its mission. Meanwhile the chipmunk checked the neighbors, the cicada buzzed a message to all cicadas near and far, and the green frog kept a sharp eye open for the mockingbird.

After a while a clear, sweet voice was heard singing on the wind. The willow tree perked up immediately. This was too good to be true! Could it be? Yes, it was the melodious singing of a mockingbird. And sure enough a perky mockingbird glided in and settled on a branch of the willow tree as if it knew the place.

The willow tree trembled with delight as the mockingbird began to sing a lilting melody. The chipmunk raced home, the cicada held his breath, and the green frog hopped up and down happily.

The mockingbird looked around seeming to be quite at home. The willow tree breathed a sigh of relief. "We are all so very glad to see you," it said. "Welcome home." The mockingbird gave her reply in a sweet tone, "Thank you all for your welcome," she said. "My mother told me about her old friend, the great willow tree, and I've been searching for you. I knew I had found you at last when I heard the voices of cicada buzzing, chipmunk chattering and green frog gurgling. Your song guided me to the great willow and I knew I was home at last."