

All Things Wild!

Nature-al Discoveries

Summertime is here and the wild things are out! The days are longer, the temperatures are warmer, the gardens are growing, and the grills are working hard! I don't know about you, but one of the things I look forward to the most (aside from gardening) is grilling! I especially enjoy grilling fresh vegetables from my garden before the groundhogs and deer can get to them. That alone is a small miracle when it happens. If you've followed along in the newsletters this year, you know that my yard is part of the deer herd's daily foraging path. I'm contemplating whether or not to hang a BUFFET sign in my yard and surrender to their voracious appetites. Last year, the deer ate all of my hostas (right down to the ground). This year, they have a more discerning palette and have chosen to dine on my delectable orange rose bushes. Tomorrow's menu, cucumber blossoms followed by a bit of rose bud and a hint of zucchini blossom. For dessert, my beloved clematis. Perhaps next year, I will consult the deer and groundhogs before planning my menu.



Wild Things...

This summer's theme is *Wild Things*. Your young naturalists will be learning about all things wild through hands-on activities, Discovery Walks and Creek Days. We will be making soap, pitching tents, exploring habitats, creating nature-al art, using a compass & map, and planting a vegetable garden. This year's garden includes potatoes, tomatoes, cantaloupe, watermelon, bell peppers, lettuce, cucumbers, and zucchini. We added a bit of whimsy this year, as well. Check out our *Jack and the Beanstalk* garden display at the front, left side of the building! *Fee Fie Foe Fum, I smell the toes of little ones!*

Here are a few books you might enjoy reading to your child this summer:

Come On, Rain! by Karen Hesse

My Father's Hands by Joanne Ryder

The Snail's Spell by Joanne Ryder

Are You a Snail? by Judy Allen

Night In the Country by Cynthia Rylant

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak

IN THE CLASSROOM

In the Vegetable Garden

The school-agers have planted the ELC vegetable garden and now it is up to all of us to help keep it healthy. There are several things each classroom can do to help.

1. **ON WATER DAYS:** When your room has a water day, please gently recycle your water in the garden. Given the oppressive dry heat we are experiencing, the garden would benefit from this method of daily watering. The garden extends across the left side of the building, from the tire-d potato garden all the way up to the front of the building. THANK YOU!
2. **WEEDS:** Older kids in rooms 4 and 5 can help by plucking small weeds from the garden (with their teacher's guidance). The weeds are the small, non-fruited things that pop up overnight!
3. **HARVESTING:** The tomatoes and bell peppers will be ready for picking when they turn vibrantly red. The cucumbers and zucchini will be fat, green, and six inches long or longer and will be easily plucked from the vine. Bon appétit!

FAMILY FUN



Raspberries are ripe and ready for picking right now, and they are *everywhere!* Children love to go berry picking, especially in the WILD! If you are unsure how to safely identify raspberries, you can purchase a reliable wild edible plant guide at a local bookstore or check out this website: <http://www.motherearthnews.com/Organic-Gardening/1999-10-01/Edible-Wild-Plants.aspx>

Wild raspberries are commonly found at the edge of woodlands, along marginal woodland trails, and along the edges of ponds, streams, and meadows. Wild raspberries are especially abundant along our ELC Discovery Path! When picking raspberries, choose the darker berries as they are the ripest and sweetest, and be careful of the thorns! Be sure to remind your young ones that berries should NEVER be picked without a supervising and well-informed adult present. Berry picking in the wild is an essential survival skill and can be quite rewarding. My sons are experienced berry pickers and, this time of year, we pick at least a quart of raspberries a day in our own neighborhood! Happy berry picking!

Newsletter written by Angela Furlong, Nature-al Discoveries™ Program Coordinator

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Kids Korner!

Fun recipes for the home and the classroom!

HOMEMADE SAND

Combine 4 cups dried, used, coffee grounds, 2 cups cornmeal, 1 cup flour, and 1/2 cup salt. Play with this sand as you would any other sand. Pretty cool stuff!

Recipe pulled from www.ooneygoeey.com

CLEAN MUD

Grate 3 Bars of Ivory Soap. In a bowl mix the grated soap, 1 roll of cheap toilet paper and some warm water. Keep mixing until it forms the consistency of mashed potatoes! You can store it in airtight container and reconstitute it with more water. Dispose of Clean Mud in the trashcan **NOT THE DRAIN!**

CREEK TRIVIA

Hellgrammites are the larval form of the Dobsonfly. They live most of their lives in creeks as Hellgrammites and only live a very short time as Dobsonflies, only long enough to mate. They don't even eat!



Photo courtesy of NCSU College of Agriculture & Life Sciences

STRAWBERRY CAKE PLAYDOUGH

1 package strawberry cake mix, 2 cups flour, 1 1/2 cups salt, 6 TBS oil, 6 tsp cream of tartar, 3 cups water. Mix ingredients. Cook over medium heat until a ball forms. Remove from heat and knead!

Recipe pulled from www.oovegooev.com



Photo by Keith Crandall

Northern Hog Suckers are very sensitive creek fish and cannot live in even slightly polluted water. They are a good sign of clean water! We saw one of these at ELC in June during a creek day!



Photo by John MacGregor

There are over 500 species of crayfish! Most grow only 2 to 4 inches long, but some can reach over 12 inches long. The picture below shows a Northern Clearwater Crayfish (non-native and very large). I spotted one of these in one of Lake Linganore's creeks a few weeks ago. It was almost 12 inches long and sat motionless beside my foot until I spotted it! I had a few young naturalists from the neighborhood with me and they were thrilled by the find! Can YOU find one? Look closely!



Photo by Dale Westaby

If you don't have access to a creek near your home, you can explore the creeks at ELC anytime. Simply sign in at the front desk!