
A Day In the Life of a Nature Connection Youth Program

Each time The Nature Connection arrives we bring new seasonal materials, new animals, and different hands-on activities.

Please see below to glimpse what happens at each visit, and a sample Seasonal Curriculum



Setting the stage

In designing a day's program we start with the season, going outdoors to collect fresh materials. We use these to create a miniature natural habitat - turning the institutional setting into a wild landscape: a meadow, forest's edge, or even an ocean.



Inspiring curiosity

Our trained Program Coordinators may open the visit with a story that relates to the day's theme, or read a poem. All youth are then offered one-one-one opportunities to see, smell, or touch the natural materials.



Therapy animals - the stars of the show

Our therapy animals are always the main attraction. They bring joy, compassion and warmth, and participants are encouraged to touch or get close to the gentle creatures – doves, rabbits, chinchillas and hedgehogs.



Being present

In every residential school we see a wide spectrum in initial interest among the children. Some are eager to engage while others have rejected the idea of a nature program before we've even arrived. It's amazing to see how the "vibe in the room" changes from the beginning to end of one session.



Hand-on activities

At each visit we bring fun projects and interactive activities so the children can engage their creativity.



Day's end

At the end of the hour-long program our habitat is packed away, and even our smallest therapy animals say good-bye for the journey home. On our next visit we will bring new seasonal materials, new stories to share, and new friends.

Sample Seasonal Curriculum

Note: These are brief sample programs for monthly groups. Each plan is customized to meet specific goals for participants and partner sites.

Month	Sample Activities	Natural Materials
September Abundance in the Garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about plants & vegetables • Hunting for growing things in garden • Art/Drawing project • Speak about value and impact of a community garden 	Salamander; Earthworms; Snails
October Pumpkins & Gourds, Snake Gourds & Snakes!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore seeds; pumpkins • Art project: Paint gourds • Experimenting with noise and quiet • Poem "October" by Joseph Pullman Porter read together. 	Snakes; dried gourds, pumpkin; varieties of apples.
December Winding Down, Winter Solstice, Decomposition, Small Wonders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore tooth marks in plants, seeds and nuts • Observe snails one-on-one. • Discuss role that small animals, insects have in ecological web • Mapping activity: ecosystem web—or youth's own "web" of interrelationships. 	Snails, ants, hermit crab; various seeds and nuts.
February Making Tracks! (*ideal after a fresh snow)	<p>Porcupine tracking</p> <p>Track-making with black paint on red paper – with rubber tracks</p> <p>Animals and human tracks and "marks" individuals make and leave behind</p> <p>Poem Burt Stevens, "Deer Tracks"</p>	Chinchilla; rabbit; dog; witch hazel