



Connecting Children To Nature

Within the space of a few decades, the way children understand and experience nature has changed radically....Richard Louv

Only 6% of children 9-13 years of age in America play outside on their own each week. Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods* says children are connected to electronic devices and not to nature. Children have replaced nature with the internet, cell phones and video games. Children who have early exposure to the outdoors have less stress, better concentration, more creativity and higher self esteem. Norman McGee, a parent from South Carolina, bought a truckload of dirt for his daughters to play with. It cost the same as a video game, but the dirt can offer more varieties of play than a video game. It can also save you money when it comes to the cost of electricity. A mound of dirt could provide hours of fun for children, their friends and families. Nature is a great educational experience for children. Nature is hard, soft, fragile, heavy, light, smooth and rough. Children can use their senses to explore nature. Parents can create outdoor playgroups with other parents and go on nature walks. If there are parents worried about potential danger, it's always safer to walk and play in groups. When participating in groups you're also improving social and emotional growth for both parents and children. Infants and toddlers should also experience nature. Early exposure will create a lifelong connection with nature. Don't be afraid to connect your children to nature during winter. Create safe winter outdoor playgroup activities. Short winter nature walks will provide hours of fun. Instead of a mound of dirt, the children can indulge in a mound of snow or mud. As always, parents could get down and dirty playing in the dirt, snow and mud. Today, children know more about the Amazon rainforest than what they know about their own backyard. Let's connect our children to nature!