

Natural Materials for Play and Learning

What natural materials can be used outdoors?

Natural materials, or natural loose parts, afford an array of open-ended play and learning opportunities, such as building, sorting, counting, and dramatic play. The availability of some natural loose parts, such as acorns and flowers, changes with the seasons, while others, such as stones and branches, are available year round. Some outdoor learning environments are rich with natural loose parts, while others may require teachers and children to gather and bring in natural loose parts to supplement their outdoor learning environments.

A list of natural loose parts:

- bamboo poles
- bark wedges
- straw bales
- small stones
- log stumps
- [tree cookies](#)
- trimmed branches
- pine cones
- leaves
- [seeds](#)
- nuts
- flowers
- wood chips
- and many more