

## Designing Living Environments for Children and Other Living Creatures

### Outdoor Sessions: Thursday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 – 3:00 PM

#### **T1. Active Play in the Outdoors**

Lead young children in fun, developmentally appropriate, inclusive physical activities in the outdoors. Learn how to organize structured physical activities that are easy to lead, use only inexpensive equipment, and can be enjoyed with young children in child care programs as well as shared with families to play together at home.

**Facilitator(s):** Diane H. Craft, PhD, Professor, SUNY Cortland.

#### **T2. All About Birds**

Learn ideas and tips for getting young children excited about birds, bird habitats, and bird watching. Participants will engage in a variety of activities including ways to 1) introduce young children to bird watching and bird appreciation, 2) develop a bird feeding, nesting and viewing area for your childcare center, 3) attract birds through plantings on your outdoor learning environment, and 4) meet the rules and regulations for childcare related to bird feeding and attracting birds in outdoor learning environments.

**Facilitator(s):** Maria Hitt, Project Manager, Growing Healthy Kids Community Gardens, Orange County Partnership for Young Children, NC.

#### **T3. A Bounty of Butterflies**

Butterflies, moths, and their associated caterpillars are one of the magical ways to engage children in the natural world – they are beautiful, have fascinating life histories, are easy to attract, and can be found in a wide variety of habitats, including urban settings. Join Museum of Natural Science staff as we walk the Garden and discuss ways to find, identify, raise, and learn to appreciate our lepidopteran neighbors.

**Facilitator(s):** Mike Dunn, Senior Manager of Outreach, and Melissa Dowland, Teacher Education Specialist, NC Museum of Natural Science, Raleigh, NC.

#### **T4. Animal, Vegetable, Mineral, Me**

We are all part of the natural world. Participants will explore ways to embrace the natural world and reflect on our place in it through creative arts and our own imaginative expression. Please join us as we create a composition using drawing and watercolor. We will trace the outline of our head and shoulders, stroll the gardens for inspiration, and add the things that we discover to our work. Our pieces will be part self-portrait and part nature. We will reflect on our work together and how our experiences can inform our work with the children.

**Facilitator(s):** Patrick Manning, Studio Teacher, Bright Horizons Enrichment Center, Raleigh, NC, and Melanie Brooks, Regional Education Coordinator, Bright Horizons Family Solutions.

#### **T5. Becoming Playful: Working with Adults to Connect Children with Nature through Play**

Playing outside is an ideal method for children to connect with their surroundings and develop an appreciation for the plants and animals that live in their own backyards. In this session, participants will consider their own relationship with the outdoor environment while exploring creative approaches to planning for play. Everyone will get the opportunity to connect with their own “kid within” as a reminder that playful, inspired, engaged adults can expand children’s potential to explore and experience through play.

**Facilitator(s):** Linda Kinney, Education Specialist, NC Zoo, Asheboro, NC.

## **T6. Creating Mini Gardens**

Learn how to bring the garden indoors by creating miniature greenhouses and terrariums for children to plant and watch grow. Participants will learn how to garden indoors throughout the seasons and about the special requirements for indoor environments, plants, and growing techniques to be successful. Join us to become an indoor gardener and create your own small garden to take back to your center.

**Facilitator(s):** Michele Rivest, MPA, Project Associate, and Sarah Werner, BFA, MLA, Design Assistant, Natural Learning Initiative, Raleigh, NC.

## **T7. Little Critters**

Join us to explore hands-on activities for toddlers and preschoolers to explore natural habitats on the playground and beyond. Educators from First Environments Early Learning Center will share ideas for going "Into the Wild" in the Daycare/Preschool setting. Participants will work together to build an observation blind from natural materials.

**Facilitator(s):** Jane Allen, Nature and Science Specialist, First Environments Early Learning Center, RTP, NC.

## **T8. Creating With Concrete**

Participants will learn how to prepare a concrete mixture that can be used to create a variety of sculptural pieces perfect for gardens, nature trails, and public spaces. Children find this material easy to use in making their own works. Found objects and botanical elements can be embedded in this material. We will discuss a variety of sculptural applications. Each participant will make a "Toad Stool Habitat" for the children's Wonder Garden using concrete, recycled materials, and natural found objects.

**Facilitator(s):** Forrest Greenslade, PhD, Artist, and Founder, Organic Forrestry, Pittsboro, NC.

## **T9. Loose Parts, Nature Play**

Remember building forts in the woods or making fairy houses with pinecones and branches? These daily experiences helped to shape the adults we have become today. Due to rapid urbanization, the increased fear of nature, and high pressure for in-class structured learning, these experiences are not part of today's childhood. Come see how "Loose Parts, Nature Play" can open the classroom walls and engage today's children with the natural world.

**Facilitator(s):** Ilisa Goldman, MLA, RLA, Ilisa Goldman Landscape Architecture and Consulting, San Diego, CA and Brad Bieber, MLA, Design Associate, Natural Learning Initiative, Raleigh, NC.

## **T10. Life Giving, Life in the Soil**

Earthworms have been called 'ecosystem engineers', 'nature's ploughs', and the world's greatest 'composters'. They play a crucial role in soil health and increasingly we are becoming aware of their connection to human health. This workshop will help build an appreciation for the role of earthworms and provide ways to integrate them into the child care environment by creating natural digging areas and developing composting practices. Vermicomposting, where worms do the work, is a simple way to turn kitchen food scraps into nutrient-rich compost for the garden. Come explore how to create both indoor and outdoor compost bins to ensure enough compost for your edible gardens.

**Facilitator(s):** Christopher Rumbley, Permaculture Practitioner, Naked Fruits, NC.

## Outdoor Sessions: Friday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 – 3:00

### F11. Field Marks and Flat Birds

Birds can be identified by looking for key characteristics regarding the shape of the bill, the tail, and the color patterns in their feathers; all of which constitute a collection of clues we call “field marks.” We use a mix of preserved bird specimens and a static course of bird photo-cutouts, our so-called “flat birds”, to help beginners identify field marks of birds in a natural setting.

**Facilitator(s):** John Connors, Coordinator of Naturalist Center, NC Museum of Natural Sciences, Raleigh, NC.

### F12. Playing Like Animals

Participants will engage in fun play activities that connect animal movements, behaviors, and habitats with fundamental motor skills and movement concepts. Being active outdoors can be easy and allows adults and children to learn important information about the world around them and the creatures that share space with them. This is a physical activity session so be prepared to move a lot and maybe even get a bit dirty and sweaty!

**Facilitator(s):** Richard Rairigh, Director of Programs and Early Childhood Development, and Meredith Dolan, Early Childhood Program Manager, Be Active North Carolina – Be Active Kids®, Morrisville, NC.

### F13. Trash to Treasure Lizard

Join us in creating a magical Lizard out of a variety of recycled materials. We will create a whimsical creature using metal, wire, grapevines, and things that used to be thrown away.

**Facilitator(s):** Elizabeth Lake, Executive Director, First Environments Early Learning Center, and Dona McNeill, Employee Services Manager, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, RTP, NC.

### F14. Swinging in the Trees!

In this practical workshop participants will create off-the-ground play experiences using nets, ropes, straps, and trees, thus creating a temporary playground fit for monkeys, squirrels, birds, and children! Participants will practice putting up scramble nets using only trees for support. In doing so, they will learn: how to tie knots in ropes, how to protect the trees from rope damage, how to select an appropriate site, how to inject a bit of risk into children’s play experiences, and how to create a temporary play space.

**Facilitator(s):** Philip Waters, Play Project Coordinator, The Eden Project, Cornwall, UK.

### F15. Plant Selection with a Purpose

This workshop will focus on learning how to select the right plants by understanding their function and requirements for specific areas in the outdoor environment. Participants will learn how to approach a nursery for information about plants and growing conditions and make decisions on what plants are appropriate for different settings, with a focus on the importance and benefit of native plants. To practice these new skills, participants will select and install plants for the bird watching area in the children’s Wonder Garden, so come prepared to dig holes and create a bird watching area that you can replicate in your own outdoor learning environment.

**Facilitator(s):** Sarah Little, MLA, RLA, Design and Research Associate, Natural Learning Initiative, Raleigh, NC.

**F16. Creating Magic with Loose Parts**

Reconnecting to our playful inner child opens us up to wondrous possibilities. Participants will play and create miniature environments in the woods, and then learn ways to intentionally prepare environments for children's outdoor play, using simple materials and a spark of creativity. Finally, participants will have a chance to build upon what they have learned by preparing a leave-behind play environment in the children's Wonder Garden.

**Facilitator(s):** Brad Bieber, MLA, Design Associate, Natural Learning Initiative, Raleigh, NC.

**F17. Wildlife Habitats and Gardens**

Birds, butterflies, and other creatures all add opportunities for exploration about the natural world. Come learn how to create a garden that attracts beautiful wildlife and provides an outdoor classroom for educators and students. Participants will learn how to attract and support local wildlife, and we will decorate bird houses made out of gourds. Participants will also discover how easy it is to certify their own outdoor environments as an official Certified Wildlife Habitat with the National Wildlife Federation.

**Facilitator(s):** Sarah Werner, BFA, MLA, Design Assistant, and Michele Rivest, MPA, Project Associate, Natural Learning Initiative, Raleigh, NC.

**F18. Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood – Creature Feature**

The natural environment presents endless opportunities for learning about math, science, literacy, arts, and the world around us. Early childhood curricula, NAEYC accreditation standards, and Head Start child outcomes – all connect to natural learning. This session will present an overview on one of the leading early childhood curriculum offered by *Project Learning Tree* to connect children to their environment, using creature-based activities. Come prepared to exhibit a sense of wonder and participate in activities from these resources.

**Facilitator(s):** Hannah Thompson-Welch, Assistant County Ranger, Wayne County, North Carolina Forest Service, and Marge Akins, Center Director, A Child's World, Greensboro, NC.

**F19. A Walk Through the Garden**

The North Carolina Botanical Garden's plant collections offer a variety of displays and settings in which to view native plants and cultivars of native plants. This interpreted stroll through the gardens will provide inspiration for those looking to incorporate native plants into landscapes at home, childcare centers, or schools. Your guide will point out species that are most appropriate for those settings and will explain the benefits of incorporating native plants into your landscape.

**Facilitator(s):** Grant Morrow Parkins, Natural Science Educator, North Carolina Botanical Garden, Chapel Hill, NC.

**F20. Fostering Empathy for Living Things**

Participants will be engaged in several hands-on activities focusing on empathy for living things. While these activities will allow adults to play and express their creativity, participants will discover that these same activities can be easily replicated with young children (ages 3- 8) using a variety of simple materials. This interactive session is based on the understanding that empathy, caring, and a sense of wonder play a key role in developing positive conservation attitudes while also promoting the holistic development of young children.

**Facilitator(s):** Dr. Ruth A. Wilson, Professor Emerita, Bowling Green State University, Albuquerque, NM.