

LOOSE PARTS NATURE PLAY

Loose Parts Nature Play is...

Unstructured outdoor play with a variety of natural materials, such as bamboo poles, tree cookies, shells, rocks, fossils, and more! This kind of play has been proven to promote creativity and imagination; is excellent physical activity; promotes cooperation and reduces stress; can improve focus, attention, motor skills and coordination. Overall it is great fun and fosters connection to nature.



Protocols for Harvesting

- Wear appropriate safety gear when gathering materials.
- Avoid harvesting materials that are poisonous or have thorns, spines or prickles (exs. Brazilian Peppertree, Mountain Laurel seed pod).
- When creating stumps cut all edges at 45 degree angles. Seal all cuts immediately with soyseal or similar product; remove branches, snags and protrusions at collar (or flush with surface if no collar); leave bark intact.



Suggested Materials

- Acorns
- Seed pods
- Flowers
- Pine cones
- Bark
- Plant parts
- Shells
- Rocks
- Fossils
- Bones, cleaned
- Dirt or soil
- Sticks

Harvesting Natural Materials

Tree Cookies

- Used for Loose Parts Kits
- Species: oak, elm, cedar, hackberry, cottonwood, cypress, ash, mulberry, others (native preferred)
- Size: 8" diameter or greater, smaller stems and branches removed



Log Stumps

- Used for vertical borders, stump jumps, climbing features, tables, seating, etc.
- Species: oak (preferred), osage orange, young cypress, cedar, juniper, elm, pecan
- Size: 8" diameter or greater, smaller stems and branches removed, can keep larger limbs attached if possible

Large Logs

- Used for horizontal borders, seating, balance logs, etc.
- Species: oak (preferred), osage orange, young cypress, cedar, elm, pecan
- Size: 12" diameter or greater, 6'-15' long; smaller stems and branches removed, prefer pieces that are curved or otherwise interesting, can keep larger limbs attached if possible



Bamboo and Sticks

- Used for building, climbing assists, etc.
- Species: bamboo, oak, cedar, elm, young cypress
- Size: bamboo poles, trimmed, 3'-8' long; small sticks 4"-8" long; smaller stems and branches removed, freshly cut, bark on (if applicable)