



Nature-Oriented Parenting

A guide for parents and grandparents to teach their children about the natural world

Never stop learning about the natural world...

My name is Adam DeWitte, Assistant Director of Education and Naturalist with the Cradle of Forestry Interpretive Association. We are a non-profit organization based out of Brevard, NC, that helps to promote the Cradle of Forestry historical site and conservation and forestry education on a national level. In one way or another, I've spent most of my life outdoors, whether building tree houses, leading hikes or identifying birds. It is my privilege to work for a group of people so committed to helping families discover the power of nature, and this is what I'd like to share with you! **Nature-Oriented Parenting** was designed by the CFIA in efforts to rejuvenate our children's sense of wonder and interaction with the natural world. Each quarter we'll be giving parents and grandparents a practical how-to guide for building a fundamental connection between their children and nature through articles, games and advice. As with anything in life, it takes time for kids to build this connection, but it *can be done!* Please feel free to call, 828-884-5713 ext.24, or email, adamcfai@citcom.net, with any ideas, comments or questions that you might have concerning this newsletter. Together, we can reconnect children and nature, and learn a few things along the way!

Wildlife Spotlight: Barred Owls

You hear the familiar hooting cry "*who cooks for you, who cooks for you all*", and you know that your neighborhood **Barred Owl** (*Strix varia*) has descended from its lofty perch in search of an evening meal. Barred Owls are one of our largest, nocturnal raptors, or birds of prey. These hunters are named for the "bars" of white and brown that pattern their breast feathers, making them extremely difficult to see among trees and foliage. Special rounded feathers on their wings make these efficient hunters completely silent during flight, while very large eyes give them the night vision they need to spot rodents, rabbits and anything else that looks like a tasty morsel. During the cold winter months, Barred Owls spend their time tending to their newly hatched chicks, which are completely covered in thick down feathers to keep them warm. Like any good parent, the adults like to keep track of how the babes are doing while they are away from the nest.

The loud, shrill sounds of cackling, hissing and barking between parents and offspring can sound very much like a gang of witches hovering above the treetops. When all flight feathers have filled in over down and are free of the waxy outer-coating, the kids will "fledge" the nest, or take their first flight as an adult. Since Barred owls usually head for wherever the food is, they spend a great deal of time in large, mixed hardwood forests. Adult oak, poplar and hickory trees may be perching spots in your own backyard! These are common areas where rodents and other small mammals can be found. Look for them perched on large branches around sundown, when the light begins to dim from the afternoon and night begins to take over.

To a barred owl, the day has just begun!



Adam DeWitte, Naturalist for the CFIA

Huge eyes help bring more light in at night.



A facial "disk" helps to scoop the slightest sound into the ears—located on the side of the owl's head.

Distinctive "barring" of white and brown stripes helps the owl camouflage on tree branches while they sleep during the day.

Outdoor Family Activity: Getting To Know A Tree

We see trees all around us at any given time, but how much do we really “get to know” the very things that give us so much on a day to day basis? This activity will allow kids of all ages to feel more connected to the trees in their backyard or in the forests that surround their community.

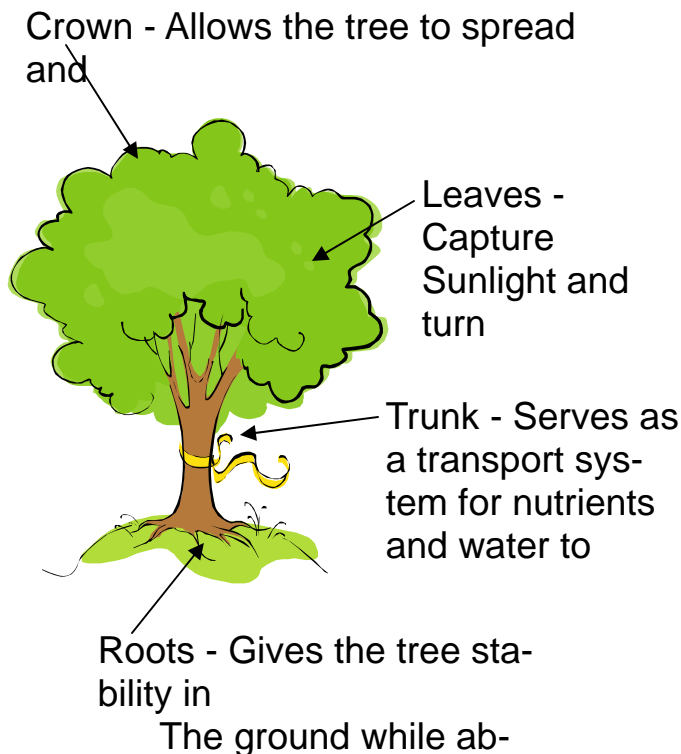
- 1) Group yourselves into pairs. One of the two will get the blindfold and tie it around the other’s eyes.
- 2) Stand in front of the group of trees, turn the blindfolded person around 2 or 3 times and lead them to any tree.
- 3) The blindfolded person will have 1 minute to walk around the tree and explore with their hands. They should touch the bark, feel for roots and branches and get a sense of how big the tree is without looking.
- 4) Lead them back to the starting point, take off the blindfold and give them a few minutes to draw a picture of the tree they just explored, including any sensory experiences they had.

They may include grass or dirt they may have felt, birds they heard or anything sensory that will allow them to draw an accurate picture. 5) When the picture is finished, switch pictures with someone from another group and see if the correct trees can be found based solely on the drawing. Give the blindfolded person a few more minutes to find the correct tree themselves. 6) Give your partner a chance to do the activity and switch partners after everyone is finished. This fun, family activity is a great way to get everyone outdoors and thinking about their senses through nature!

Activity length: 1 hour

You’ll need: Blindfolds, pad of paper and crayons

Beforehand: Scout out several trees that you can use in your yard or a local park.



True or False: A tree gives

How well do you know your tree products?
Take this quiz with your family and look to page 4 for the answers!

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Toothpaste | 11. Crayons |
| 2. Soft Drinks | 12. Stamp Ink |
| 3. CDs | 13. Hot Chocolate |
| 4. Hand Lotion | 14. Yarn |
| 5. Magic Markers | 15. Tape |
| 6. Chewing Gum | 16. Facial Tissue |
| 7. Cinnamon | 17. Handkerchiefs |
| 8. Detergents | 18. Medicine |
| 9. Laminate Sheets | 19. Coffee |
| 10. Glue | 20. Dryer Sheets |

"Send the kids to the woods. They are better for them than any classrooms built of brick." - Dr. Carl Alwin Schenck

Outdoor Family Activity: Starting A Backyard Compost Station

You've finished cleaning up after dinner and notice the strange, unpleasant aromas radiating from the trash can. That smell of rotting food is a great opportunity to reduce waste, help the environment and save yourself a little money on the side! By building a very simple composting station in your backyard, you provide a place for most food scraps and yard waste, which will eventually break down into a rich, fertile soil. Composted soil is perfect for flower beds, containers, houseplants and vegetables. To simply put how composting works, it is merely a mix of four basic ingredients: nitrogen (green materials such as landscape trimmings), carbon (brown materials such as dead leaves, twigs and hay), water (the pile should always be as moist as a wrung-out sponge) and air (the bacteria

To Begin:

- Make a circular compost bin out of chicken wire-approximately 3' in diameter by 4' high. You'll need wire clippers to help you out. Watch out for sharp edges!
- Set the bin in a sunnier area of your backyard. Clear a small area around the bin.
- You can begin filling the bin immediately, keeping in mind the list of things that can and cannot go in.



What can go in?

Leaves, broken twigs, pet hair, shredded newspaper, coffee grounds, tea bags, ground oyster shells, rotten fruits and veggies, egg shells, fruit/veggie peels and stems, chopped citrus rinds, peanut shells, small amounts of wood ash.



What stays out?

Dog/cat waste, meat, bones, dairy, grease of any kind, oils, sick garden/house plants, charcoal ashes, chemically treated plants.

What Next?

- Make sure the pile is moist, but not wet.
- "Turn" the compost often-stir it up at least every few weeks to get air moving through.
- New items, such as fruits/weeds, etc., should be put towards the middle and covered. You want to keep the compost balanced and allow the new items to "cook" in the middle.
- As the compost decomposes, it will generate heat and can reach 140-160 degrees!

And Finally...

Your compost will be done when the organic material looks uniformly dark brown and has an earthy smell. There may be bits of root or wood, which can be screened out. You can continue to make new compost by removing the finished product and adding more material to the bin. Enjoy!!

Food and Nature: The Forgotten Connection

At any given time during the day, we grab a container from the fridge, pull a box down from the cabinet, or open up a jar in order to find something to eat. But have you ever stopped to ask yourself what makes up the ingredients in your favorite foods? The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) works hard to test all ingredients to make sure they are not harmful to your family, but in order to deliver a quality product that lasts in the cabinet, certain elements must be added. Check your box of crackers, can of soup or frozen pizza. Chances are, there are large amounts of sodium (salt), sugar or preservatives to keep the foods from spoiling over a specified period of time. Sure, it is much easier to buy and consume products that last for a month or more in the refrigerator or cabinet, but the overall effects on the human body can become steadily worse over the years. Next time you shop at the local grocery store, try picking out foods that have the *shortest ingredients list possible*. There are numerous alternatives to the sodium and sugar-filled products that most stores will sell you. Just look for the "organic" section and check out the label. Chances are that the food is packaged with less sodium, fewer preservatives and fewer detrimental chemicals. It's worth it!

The Cradle of Forestry and The Cradle of Forestry Interpretive Association

The Cradle of Forestry is considered the birthplace of modern Forestry in the United States. George Vanderbilt, in creating his Biltmore Estate, purchased 125,000 acres of forested land near Asheville, North Carolina. He then hired a forester, Gifford Pinchot, who created the first comprehensive forest management plan for this estate during his tenure (1892-1895). Once management of the estate began, Dr. Carl Alwin Schenck established the first forestry school in the United States, the Biltmore Forest School. Finally, after the Weeks Act of 1911, the U.S. government purchased 90,000 acres from Edith Vanderbilt to establish the Pisgah National Forest. This first land acquisition was crucial in the development of our National Forest lands, and instrumental in creating the United States Forest System. In 1968 the U.S. Congress designated 6,500 acres of land near Brevard, NC as the "Cradle of Forestry in America". Four years later the Cradle of Forestry Interpretive Association was established to assist in this operation and to foster a mission of forestry and conservation education.

Answers to the True and False Tree Quiz

How did you do? Numbers 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18 and 19 are all actual products made from different trees from around the world! Were you surprised? Here's how the products are derived:

Toothpaste contains cellulose gum, extracted from wood. **Soft Drinks** that have citrus flavors contain "esters" which are taken from wood rosin. **Lotions** contain Vitamins A and E from wood extracts. **Chewing Gum** comes from rosin or storax. **Cinnamon** is the bark of the laurel tree which is cut and dried. **Glue** comes from natural hard resins. **Detergents** are made from crude fatty acids in wood. **Crayons** contain carnauba wax, produced by the leaves of the carnauba tree. **Hot Chocolate** uses cellulose, which is a building block of wood, as a binding agent. **Tape** is derived from the sugars extracted during the pulping process. **Facial Tissue**, along with all other paper, is made from cellulose. **Medicine**, such as aspirin, may come from the bark of the willow tree, while other tablets are held together by lignin, the natural glue in wood. **Coffee** mainly comes from the berries of the Arabica coffee tree, which are dried and roasted.

In Appreciation

Smith Barney
Morrow Insurance
Pepsi
Henderson Oil Company
Southern Pride of WNC, Inc.

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