



20+ IDEAS FOR GET OUTDOORS WEEK & OUTDOOR CLASSROOM DAY



Nature
Education
Aotearoa

Kia ora!

Thanks for downloading this resource full of great ideas to help support you on Outdoor Classroom Day and during Get Outdoors Week.

I am Celia from Little Kiwis Nature Play and I want to help you get your tamariki outdoors more with confidence.

Hopefully you will find this resource useful - if you do please email me and let me know at celia@littlekiwisnatureplay.com

WHAT IS OUTDOOR CLASSROOM DAY?

Get Outdoors Day is a global movement that is promoting getting children outdoors both at school and at home. Over the last couple of years it has picked up momentum in New Zealand and more and more schools, centres and organisations are promoting and supporting the movement.

We support it in the hope that we can inspire schools to carry on beyond the day to spend more time outdoors for the mental health, physical health and overall well being of their students.

WHAT IS GET OUTDOORS WEEK?

Get Outdoors Week is organised by Recreation Aotearoa and is about safely and easily exploring New Zealand's great outdoors.

In a centre or school context, this is about getting outside the classroom and using nature as the teacher. This could be on your own grounds or in a local park or reserve that is close to you.

This resource pulls together a variety of ideas aimed at helping to improve mental health and wellbeing through spending time outdoors, while also linking to the curriculum and supporting key competencies and dispositions. They're also great ideas for lockdowns!

Another bonus is they can all be adapted for younger or older children.

Get in touch if you have any questions or [join our Private Facebook Group](#) if you are looking for like minded people who want to use nature more in their teaching.

Celia Hogan
Little Kiwis Nature Play

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Bug Hunt

Go into an outdoor space, garden or to a path and sit in one place for 5 minutes. Look closely at the area around where you are sitting and notice what insects you can see or hear. Notice their size, how many legs they have, if they have wings and how many body parts they have. What colours, how many, what types? NB: You can use a magnifying glass if you have one.

Extension Ideas and Questions:

Choose an insect that has interested you the most. What is it about that insect that you liked? What do you think it was doing? What do you think it eats? Where do you think it lives? Can you find out what type of insect it is? What is the Māori name? Collect your data and draw a picture or write a story of the insect that interested you.

Curriculum Links

Science, maths, art, language, classifying, observation, fine motor development, thinking, managing self, curiosity, comparison.



Weed Warrior

Go outside and find a big weed! Using gloves gently take the weed out of the ground trying to keep the root in tact.

Explore the weed. Look at its roots, the stem, the head, is there a flower and/or seeds?

Have a go at dissecting it. If you have some scissors these could be useful or even tweezers. What did you notice when you dissected it? What shapes did you see? Can you find out what the name of the weed is? What makes a weed a weed? Why do people want to get rid of weeds, what impact can weeds have on our native plants?

Curriculum Links

Science, maths, language, classifying, observation, fine motor development, thinking, managing self, curiosity.



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Natures Patterns

Go for a walk around your school, a local part or your neighbourhood and collect some natural resources of all different shapes and sizes e.g. sticks, leaves, seedpods, nuts, stones, pebbles, shells etc...

Create your own pattern using the resources you collected. Can you make a miniature pattern, a large pattern, a round pattern, other shapes, a colourful pattern, a pattern with only five items, a vertical pattern? Or make a mandala, you might need to find out what it is first!

Curriculum Links:

Maths, science, thinking, belonging, communication, participation, fine motor development, problem solving, sorting, classification, concentration, creativity, imagination, organisation.



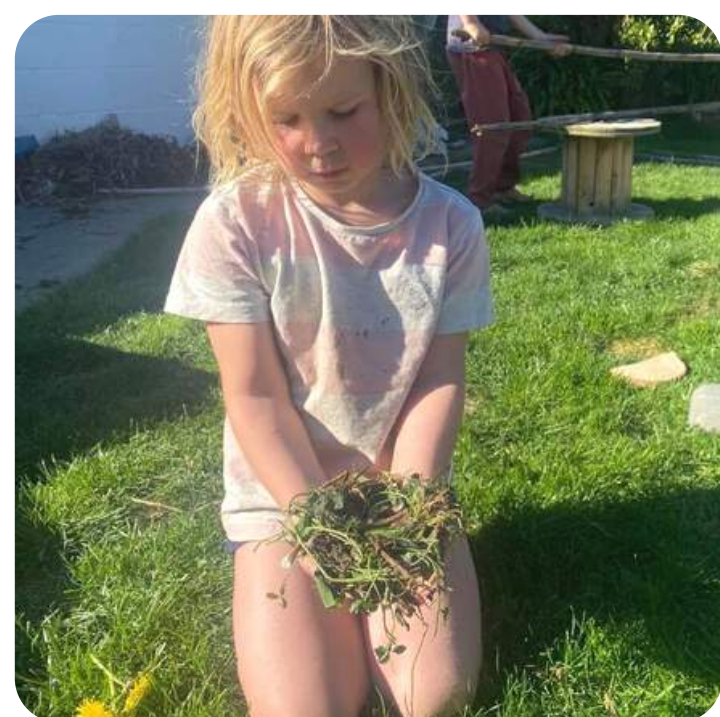
Build a Nest

Go for a walk around your school, park or neighbourhood and collect some natural resources e.g. sticks, leaves, moss, lichen, feathers, grass, mud, clay.

Create your own bird nest using the resources you have collected. Why do birds build nests? What is a habitat? Would your nest be good for a big or small bird? How do birds make their nests without hands? Can you see any birds' nests in your local trees? How do they compare to yours? Could you build a child size nest?

Curriculum Links:

Art, science, maths, thinking, problem solving, fine motor development, creativity, imagination, patience, persistence, organisation, belonging, concentration.



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Nature Frame

Collect some sticks of similar lengths and find something to bind the sticks together.

TIP: Ti Kouka (Cabbage Tree leaves) can be used to bind the sticks together, just take strips off the leaves and use like string. Ti Kouka is best used when damp. Break the sticks into four equal lengths. Take strips of Ti Kouka or string and tie the sticks together to make a 4-sided frame. Feel free to add other resources to your frame, get creative!

Next, go outside for a wander and look through your frame until you find a 'picture' you like.

You can remember the 'picture' in your frame, the colours, what's in it and the size of things. Then go and either draw the picture from memory OR write a description of the picture. Or you could talk to the rest of you class about your 'picture' and why you chose that scene.

Curriculum Links:

Arts, language, maths, technology, persistence, being involved, problem solving, fine motor development, creativity, reflection, attentiveness.



Leaf Life

Go for a walk and collect 10 different leaves of various shapes and sizes.

Sort the leaves from smallest to largest. Then group them into different groups i.e. ones with smooth edges, ones that are serrated, ones with many little leaves or large ones.

Which ones are soft? Which ones are spiky? Which ones are dry? Which ones have freshly dropped off a tree, how can you tell? Can you identify the name of the tree from looking at the leaf? Are there any leaves from native trees? What is the Māori name of the plants? When they're scrunched up, which ones smell nice and which ones smell bad? Could you find some string and thread the leaves to make a head piece or a necklace?

Curriculum Links:

Science, maths, art, exploration, thinking, curiosity, organising, classification, sensory development, comparison.



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Boat that Floats

Go for a walk and gather some resources that would be helpful to make a boat. This could include sticks, leaves, flowers, grass and something like Ti Kouka (Cabbage Tree) which can be used like string to tie it together if needed.

Once you have created your boat, put some water in a bucket or a sink and see if it floats!

Why do you think it stayed afloat or sunk? What materials helped it stay afloat? If you could make one change to your boat what would that be and why? What did Māori use to make boats that could carry people? What did they use for paddles? How would you make a boat that could hold your own weight?

Curriculum Links:

Arts, maths, science, Te Ao Māori, technology, thinking, exploration, persistence, managing self, participating, fine motor development, problem solving, creativity, imagination, confidence, curiosity.



Olympic Obstacle Course

Gather a variety of resources from around the school that you can use to create an obstacle course. This could include pieces of wood, a garden hose, old tyres, broom sticks, tarpaulin, rope, chairs, shoes, bamboo, balls – anything that could be used as an obstacle. If you have a loose parts play area this is ideal but the tamariki can think outside the box if your school doesn't!

When designing your course think about incorporating balance, agility, speed, jumping, crawling and even a skill! Use what you have and think creatively.

Curriculum Links:

Maths, physical education, arts, problem solving, thinking, confidence, persistence, responsibility, imagination, managing self, participating, sharing an idea, reflection, resourcefulness.



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Nature Potions

Resources needed:

containers, bowls, buckets or old pots and pans.

Go for a wander around your school, park or your neighbourhood and collect some potion making stuff like flowers, grasses, sticks, bark, moss, nuts, leaves and a sprinkle of dirt for good measure. Add water and make a magic spell or perhaps make a café and design a menu!

Curriculum Links:

Science, maths, thinking, participating, managing self, language, writing, fine motor development, problem solving, creativity, imagination, sensory development.



Make a Hut or Shelter

In your outdoor space, build a hut or shelter. Use what is available e.g. sticks, broomsticks, tarps, old blankets or sheets, tables, chairs, tarpaulin, ropes, playground, trees, trampoline or a fence.

Consider if your hut would be good if it rained or if it was windy? Could you do anything to stop the rain coming through? How many people does it fit, is it sturdy, is there anything you would do to improve the construction?

Curriculum Links:

Maths, technology, construction, problem solving, creativity, confidence, persistence, thinking, managing self, participating, reflection, resourcefulness.



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Make an Edible Garden

Resources Needed:

Garden bed, compost, plants, gloves and garden folk / trowel

Herbs are a great start as they can be eaten easily as well as things like strawberries or salad greens. For tips on keeping children safe while gardening head over to [Click Here](#).

First, prepare the soil. For tips on making healthy soil [click here](#). Create small holes for the plants following the instructions for depth. Place plants in holes and cover / fill with soil. Push down gently around the base of the plant to stabilise. Water each plant. You can also use a liquid fertiliser if you have some.

The rituals of watering the plants every day, caring and nurturing for something as well as understanding the life cycle of plants are some of the reasons that make gardening great.

Curriculum Links:

Maths, technology, construction, problem solving, creativity, confidence, persistence, thinking, managing self, participating, reflection, resourcefulness.



Plant a Bee Friendly Garden

Resources Needed:

A Bee flower seed mix (you can get packets from any garden shop and some hardware shops for less than \$5) and follow the instructions on the packet

OR pick some individual seed types and plant for the seasons. Here are some summer flower ideas: lavender, agastache, Erysimum 'Bowles Mauve', scabious, comfrey, foxgloves, cardoon, echinops. For tips on keeping children safe while gardening [Click Here](#).

Consider what is pollen and nectar? What is pollination? What would happen if there were no bees? What different types of bees visit your area? How long do bees live for? How many honey bees can live in a hive? How much honey can they make? What flowers could you plant to help bees in the harder months of winter and early spring?

Curriculum Links:

Science, maths, thinking, participating, managing self, language, fine motor development, problem solving, imagination, sensory development.



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Bring the Indoors Out

Here are some ideas to spark your imagination of things that you would normally do inside, that you could try outside:

- Read a book to your class
- Children can read their own book under a tree
- Do a drawing
- Play with clay
- Write a story
- Build a structure
- Make up a dance
- Have a music session
- Do a play / performance
- Celebrate the seasons
- A science experiment

What other ideas do you have?



Nature Journal

You can create your own or use our premade [nature journal template](#) to help you start.

Resources Needed:

Paper, pens, string or staples OR our [printout](#)

To make your own get a few sheets of paper together and fold them in half. Tie some string around the centre fold. Design the front cover.

Inside the journal you can either leave it free or create some theme pages. If you open up the nature journal template you will get some inspiration. Things you could include are drawings, sticking things in, the weather, sensory observations, stories, things you notice - birds, insects, fungus, trees, leaves, flowers.

Curriculum Links:

Science, technology, problem solving, creativity, thinking, managing self, participating, reflection, resourcefulness.



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Make a Bug Hotel

Resources Needed:

Here are some ideas to create your bug hotel - Pellets, bricks, wood, bedding materials, bamboo, sticks, pinecones, leaves, cardboard, terracota pots, large pieces of bark.
A hacksaw and or secateurs could be useful for cutting up items.

Find a shady and sheltered spot for the bug hotel. Stack the pellets or other materials to make the outer walls or layers. Ensure they are stable when positioning. Put the bedding materials inside the bug hotel. With a bug hotel that uses pallets you will require a lot of bedding so it could become an ongoing project.

Curriculum Links:

Science, maths, thinking, participating, managing self, language, writing, fine motor development, problem solving, creativity, imagination, sensory development.



Make Music

Communication is sound and nature is full of sound.

Collect a variety of natural resources that can make sounds in a variety of ways. You might collect sticks, rocks, pebbles, leaves, seed pods, bamboo, branches, dirt.

Explore the different sounds. What makes a loud sound? What makes a soft sound? What sounds are surprising? What didn't make much of a sound at all? Which sounds compliment each other? Can you create a short piece of music with a variety of different sounds? What is rhythm? What is a beat?

Curriculum Links:

Music, technology, construction, problem solving, creativity, confidence, persistence, thinking, managing self, participating, resourcefulness.



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Map Your School or Local Park

Take a walk around your school or local park. Notice the features. Features like trees, classrooms, fences, playgrounds, sheds, gardens, pathways, car parks, sports fields.

Consider distances between features and how you will work out the scale. Depending on the age you may be able to provide an outline of the area.

Curriculum Links:

Maths, technology, thinking, participating, managing self, language, symbols, writing, fine motor development, problem solving, creativity.



Create a Rogaine (What's that?)

Using a map of the school or park (or using a map you have created yourself), create a rogaine. A Rogaine is a mix of map reading skills, check points, strategy and fun. It can be done on foot or bike. First, map out 10 checkpoints (or how many you choose) on the map. Create a clue for each checkpoint. At each checkpoint put some stones in a container or small bowl.

Students will then receive a map and the clues and have to go and find as many checkpoints as they can, collecting a stone from each, and get back to the start/finish before their time is up. You can choose how long they get e.g. 10mins

Students could create a rogaine together and then swap maps with another group.

Curriculum Links:

Map reading, technology, physical education, problem solving, creativity, persistence, thinking, managing self, participating, resourcefulness.



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Outdoor Fire

Resources Needed:

Paper, tinder (small sticks, dried grass), branches or wood, lighter or flint and steel.
Something to cook on the fire e.g marshmallows, damper, a pot to make vegetable soup

Find a good location for your fire. Set some boundaries. Light the fire. Start cooking.
Here is a **FIRE HANDOUT** that will be useful when thinking about how to set it up and what safety considerations to think about.

Curriculum Links:

Science, cooking, thinking, participating, managing self, language, problem solving, sensory development, risk management.



Rubbish Walk

Resources Needed:

Rubbish carrier (sack, bucket or bag) , protective gloves (kids gardening gloves work well)
Closed toe shoes and a place to wash hands afterwards.

Choose an area to go and collect rubbish. Depending on age of children avoid glass or sharp objects or have a process for picking up glass. Avoid going into waterways (you can write a letter to the council afterwards). Stay together as a group. Wear gloves when picking up rubbish. Be aware of any wildlife that is in the area and try not to disturb.

Extension Ideas and Conversations:

Lay all the rubbish out and separate it into recyclable and non-recyclable. Sort and classify the rubbish. How did the rubbish get there? What happens if it goes in our water ways? What happens if the wildlife eat it? Who is responsible for keeping the park clean and tidy?

Curriculum Links:

Sustainability, problem solving, confidence, persistence, thinking, managing self, participating, resourcefulness, sorting, clasifying, risk management.



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Make Natures Tea

An edible potion if you like! If you have a garden or are based near a good foraging location this is helpful. Otherwise ask for some things from home. e.g. lemon, mint, blackberries, raspberries, kanuka, fennel, stinging nettle, raspberry leaf, kawakawa, thyme, catnip, ginger to name a few.

To make tea gather your ingredients, give children or groups their own jar to put their 'nature tea' in, boil some water and add to jar. I find glass jars work well as you can see all the ingredients and watch the water change colour. Let it settle and pour into cups.

You could ask children to take note of their ingredients. What combinations worked? What didn't? What make them taste nice? Which flavours are strong? How much do you need to add? What are the beneficial properties of the ingredients that you combined?

Curriculum Links:

Science, thinking, participating, managing self, language, writing, fine motor development, problem solving, creativity, imagination, sensory development, risk management.



Journey Sticks

This is a beautiful addition for a walk. It is a sensory idea that can be done in a few different ways. The concept is that students go on a walk. As they walk they will gather a few different natural treasures that stand out for them. They then add their treasure to their stick.

The stick itself can literally be a stick about the length of elbow to hand. You can then either use string of Ti Kouka (stipes of cabbage leaf) to tie into one end of your stick. As you find your treasures, use the sting to wrap them onto the stick. By the end of the walk they will have sticks full of natural treasures.

It can also be done with softer wood to make a bracelet, or with string to make a necklace.

Curriculum Links:

Maths, construction, problem solving, fine motor development, creativity, persistence, thinking, managing self, participating, resourcefulness.



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Get to Know a Tree

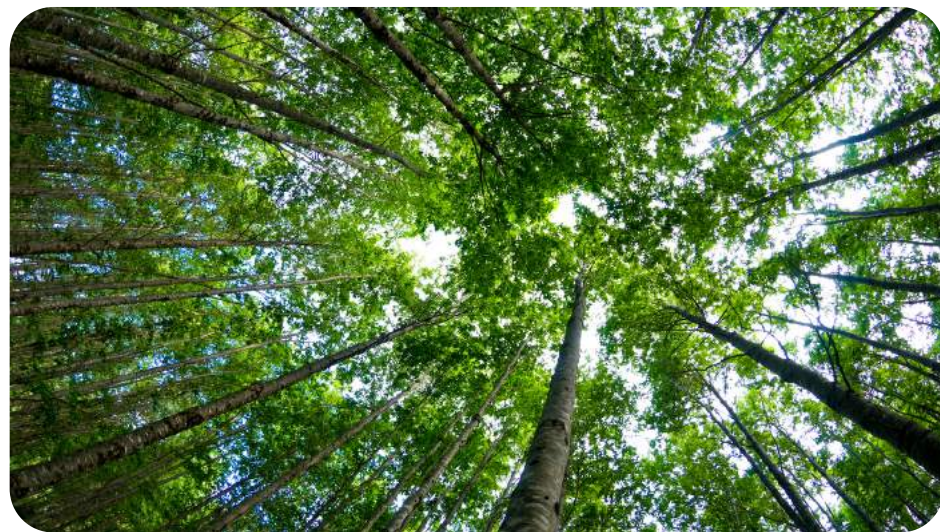
Resources Needed:

Blindfold (or just trust to close eyes)

In pairs, one person leads the blindfolded person to a tree or plant. The blindfolded person uses their hands to touch, smell, feel the tree. They will notice the texture, the size and shape of leaves, if it's smooth, rough or prickly. Then once they have gotten to know the tree, they will be led back to the starting place, spun around three times and their blindfold taken off. The person now must decide which was their tree.

Curriculum Links:

Science, observation, sensory exploration, problem solving, creativity, confidence, thinking, managing self, participating, reflection.



What Next?

We want to help you to use nature as the teacher. Sometimes it can be a bit scary heading outdoors with all the safety stuff to think about and there there's know what to do and how it links to the curriculum.

Here at Little Kiwis Nature Play we help you to build your confidence so that when you do go outdoors with children, you have a clear plan of how to manage the group to keep them safe and know what to do when and how to link it easily to the curriculum.

We run workshops, teacher only days, conferences as well as consulting to centres and schools who are wanting to develop their outdoor classroom or set up a nature programme or their site or as an excursion.

Find out more on our website or email celia@littlekiwisnatureplay.com with questions or to organise a chat to see what would work best for you.

Thanks to Nature Education Aotearoa for supporting this resource.

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