Guidelines for using the outdoors.

The Foundation Stage Curriculum guidance clearly states that as practitioners we need to be planning good quality learning experiences indoors and outdoors. It is interesting to note that many of the photographs in the guidance and all on the front cover are children enjoying outdoor provision and this is even more evident in the draft Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.

The Early Years Outdoors vision and values for outdoor play Learning Through Landscapes states that:

- **All children have the right to experience and enjoy the essential and special nature of being outdoors.**
- **Young children thrive and their minds and bodies develop best when they have free access to stimulating outdoor environments for learning through play and real experiences.**
- **Knowledgeable and enthusiastic adults are crucial to unlocking the potential of outdoors.**

As Early Years settings delivering the Foundation Stage Curriculum you are required to:

- **Provide well planned play both indoors and outdoors.**
- **Use outdoors as a learning environment.**
- **Meet the needs of all children.**
- **Provide rich and stimulating experiences indoors and outdoors and creative and imaginary play activities.**
- **Use this space well and capitalise on what it offers that inside cannot.**
- **Give children sufficient time to work in depth and enable them to re-visit experiences.**
- **Make outdoors a safe and comfortable environment where children feel secure and valued.**
- **Observe children outside and identify and plan for children’s interests and learning styles.**
- **Identify areas for improvement in terms of organisation, management, extending resources or training to improve provision.**

The outdoors can offer rich provision across all the 6 areas of learning, as this Early Years website is developed we shall be looking at some of these areas, offering advice and ideas for you to try out.

This term we are looking at:

- **Learning Through Landscapes Early Years Conference 2006.**
- **Growing outdoors.**
- **Ideas, ideas, ideas…..**
- **Your Spot.**
- **SEEDS (New County Outdoor Forum)**
- **Ideas for resources boxes**
USING THE OUTDOORS.

“The outdoor environment offers the potential for children to do, think, feel and be at the same time.”
Alison Clark.

I was very fortunate to be able to attend this annual conference and meet a variety of Early Years professionals across the country. This year’s conference celebrated the growing development of high quality outdoor learning across the country and looked at what makes playing and learning out of doors effective for young children. Why do children respond so strongly to this special environment and how can we make the best use of this unique resource? The conference presented some of the exciting research into outdoor play that has recently been carried out.

The Conference Speakers were:

- Alison Clarke, Research Officer at the Thomas Coram Research Unit of the Institute of Education in London. Views from inside the shed: children’s perspectives as a starting point for change.

- Felicity Thomas, Head of Centre and Stephanie Harding, Pedagogy Leader, Earlham Early Years Centre, Norwich. Enquiries into child-initiated activity and adult interaction on our outdoor play.

- Angela Anning, Research Professor of Childhood Education at the University of Leeds and Trustee of Learning through Landscapes Action research to enhance practice in the early years.

I particularly found Alison Clark’s presentation interesting. She has looked at meaningful ways to engage children by actively listening, documenting their views and experiences to inform practice and provision of the outdoors. Alison used examples of two research studies, Spaces to Play and Living Spaces which focus on young children’s views and experiences of their early childhood environment. One of the methods Alison uses is the Mosaic Approach, which uses adult observation, children interviews, and children using cameras, tours by children and recording through map making. Questions such as “show me what is important here”, “What do you like doing?” the
child takes the lead role, not the adult. The Mosiac Approach is “visible listening” of children’s views, which can then be used to inform practice and developing child-led environments.

- If you are interested in finding out more these are some of Alison Clark’s publications:
  - Clark, A and Moss, P. (2005) Spaces to Play: more listening to young children using the Mosiac approach. London:

- Further reading and websites:
  - Listening as a way of life: A series of five leaflets. National Children’s Bureau Tel 020 7843 6008
  - www.earlychildhood.org.uk includes work on consulting with young children.
  - www.ltl.org.uk Early Years Outdoors part of Learning through Landscapes offers information on discovering children’s perspectives on their outdoor environments and much more.
GROWING OUTDOORS

Why not use tyres for growing?

- Tyres are a free resource that can be obtained from Garages and local farms just ask!
- Depending on the depth and number of tyres stacked you can grow a vast amount of vegetables, fruit and flowers. For example, you can plant one tyre with spring onions, lettuces, radishes, strawberries etc. Two-tyre stack with leeks, a three tyre stack with carrots and a four-tyre stack with potatoes.
- The tyres can also be painted.
- To reduce the amount of compost used, line the inside of the tyre with newspaper.
- Here are some quick growers with flowers:
  - CLIMBERS, Mile Minute Vine, Morning Glory, Nasturtium, Honeysuckle, Clematis Montana.
  - ANNUALS, Marigolds, Love in a Mist, Daisies and Sunflowers.
- Here are some quick growers to eat.
  - Salad Bowl Lettuce, radishes, chives, runner beans, peas, spinach, spring onions, carrots, strawberries.

Useful websites:
- www.bbc.co.uk/gardening A reliable source of ideas and inspiration.
- www.hdra.org.uk Gardening organic a national charity lots of useful information and fact sheets on gardening organically.
- www.rhs.org.uk The Royal Horticultural Society lots of useful information for gardening with children.

A suggested selection of appropriate storybooks and information texts that can support planting and growing in the setting indoors and outdoors.
- A Seed in Need by Sam Godwin.
- Flowers – Let’s Look at Series.
- Growing Things by Carolyn Scarce.
- Titch by Pat Hutchins.
- Jaspers Beanstalk by Nick Butterworth.
- Oliver’s Fruit Salad by Vivian French.
- Growing Vegetable Soup by Lois Ehlert.
- The Tiny Seed by Eric Carle.
- Flowers by Rene Mettler.
Don’t forget one excellent resource is a camera particularly a digital camera. Children can record the process of planting, growing and harvesting and then edit the images with an adult to make into a diary or simple book to enjoy and talk about.
IDEAS, IDEAS, IDEAS.........

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH A FENCE?

- Collect a variety of materials such as, ribbons, tinsel, raffia, ties, scarves, wool, cellophane, grass, leaves etc for weaving and creating pictures.
- Attach large pieces of paper, lining paper, corrugated cardboard from boxes etc to paint large scale using a variety of mark making tools.
- Attach a washing line, make a number line, can you put them in order? What’s missing? Add washing powder bags next to numbers; can they collect objects to match the numbers?
- Make a natural sensory trail using a washing line along the fence, to develop language or a guessing game if blind folded.
- Add hooks for a washing basket. How many balls/beanbags can you get into the basket? Encourage the children to tally their score.
- Explore mark making with buckets/water/large brushes and rollers.
- Attach everyday sound making objects such as metal spoons, small pans, sieve, bells, chimes, etc.
- The fence can also support problem solving activities such as attaching guttering to make the water flow in a direction, making a pulley system, creating a den, let the children be creative in their thinking.
- Growing plants and climbers, attaching pots and baskets to the fence. Hanging tomato plants, strawberries, lettuce are ideal alongside flowers.
- Attaching MDF board and create permanent sensory 3D pictures with the children, using items such as corks, lids, wood, etc. Children and adults can come back again and again to enjoy.
- Hooks for attaching equipment such as hats, hoops, bags, rucksacks etc for independent access.

These are just a few ideas, it would be great to hear how you are using your fences, send us your ideas or pictures in action so that we can include this in our next update.
YOUR SPOT!!

This is your chance to show everyone what you have been doing in the outdoors. If you would like to send your pictures in then please contact Earlyyears@dorsetcc.gov.uk. Please ensure written permission for displaying photographs has been obtained from carers as anyone can access this website, if unsure of this process we can advise.

Spring flowers in Tyres from Handypaws in Durweston

Good idea for outdoor music from Noah’s Ark Pre-school in Weymouth
Fun on Outdoor Training Sessions

Weaving a fish on a fence

Exploring a natural resource box
This exciting new County outdoor Forum will commence this Autumn Term. (Hopefully you have all received our questionnaire and replied to help us ensure we are meeting your needs and expectations!) The main aim of the Forum is to support and sustain practitioners in developing high quality outdoor learning that is inclusive to all. This will be achieved by meeting regularly to share good practice and ideas, develop sustainable resources, build upon our skills and knowledge through outside speakers and exploring topics together and most of all have fun.

Please look out for the fliers inviting you to the first event!

Any further suggestions for articles to be included please send to earlyyears@dorsetcc.gov.uk.
Outside Resource Ideas

These can be in boxes, bags, backpacks, buckets etc.
The resources do not have to be real – they can be toy or made by the children.
Here are some examples -

**Explorer’s backpack**
- Maps
- Binoculars
- Notepad and pen
- Tape recorder
- Mobile phone
- Hat
- Specimen jars
- Gloves
- Magnifiers
- Compass
- Postcards
- Tent (piece of thin material and pegs)
- Camera
- Travel book
- Etc

**Windy Day**
- Bubble mixture
- Variety of bubble blowers
- Ribbons
- Kites
- Handheld windmills
- Carrier bags and string (good Kites)
- Balloons and string
- Strips of thin material

**Baby’s Day Out**
- Baby dolls
- Baby carriers
- Bottles
- Nappies
- Changing mat
- Toys
- Baby food
- Blanket
- Wipes
- Camera
- Mobile phone
- Story book

**Window Cleaner**
- Gloves
- Buckets
- Cloths
- Wipes
- Sponges
- Bubble mixture
- Ice scrapers
- Laminated instructions
- Price list
- Diary
- Pens etc