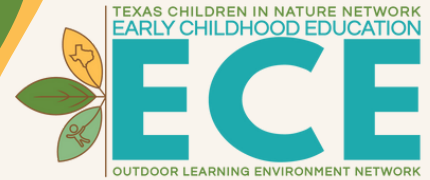


Newsletter

Spring 2025



ECE Network News:

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Outdoor Learning Environment Early Childhood Education Network Newsletter. We are pleased to announce that our network launch has been successful, with close to 70 Pathfinders now part of the ECE Network! Big gratitude to everyone who has shared information about our launch and encouraged others to join this initiative. The exchange of ideas, support, and resources is central to the mission of the ECE Network.

The ECE network is all about you! Beth Edwards, ECE Network Program Manager, would love to hear about your projects, ideas, and resources needed to reimagine your outdoor learning programs!
Bedwards@childreninnaturenetwork.org.

Did you know?

20 minutes spent in green spaces
Increases attention span and focus
AND...

- significantly boosts mood and reduces stress levels.
- playing in dirt reduces stress! Dirt contains *Mycobacterium Vaccae*, a natural bacterium that boosts serotonin levels, reducing stress and depression.
- improves sleep quality.
- Children move more frequently and bigger outdoors.

[More on Health Benefits](#)

[Outdoor play is essential.](#)

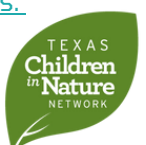


Spring Activities for Little Ones:

Start a garden! Engaging in gardening activities need not be an intimidating endeavor. It can be as simple as growing herbs in a couple of planters or turning a small patch into a vegetable garden. Garden centers often offer half barrels that are sufficiently spacious to accommodate a small garden. Plants suggestions Basil, Dill, Parsley, Chives.

[Beginning Garden Tips](#)

[Advanced gardening ideas.](#)



Spring observations:

Spring is perfect for observing and recording weather and plant life. Take a walk and observe the trees, leaves, flowers, and weather on campus, ask children for their observations. Stop at an interesting nature rich spot. Provide clipboards, paper and writing tools to children and ask them to draw what they see and notice. Do this every month through the year to capture the changes.

For infants and toddlers, walk around the playground and look at the clouds together, talk about the breeze, the sun, and leaves on trees. Place non-mobile babies on blankets on the grass to experience the outdoors.

Sensory Discovery

Fill sensory/water tables or place large bowls on a table and fill them with wildflowers. Provide tools such as tongs, magnifying glasses, and tweezers for children to deconstruct the flowers and examine the parts of the plant. Include ice cubes made from colored water to enhance the sensory experience. Identify the parts of the plants together as the children work. Discuss and observe the smell, sights, textures, and interactions with the tools.

Take a nature walk! Give each child a paper bag to collect nature treasures on the walk. Then, set out glue, paper and drawing supplies and invite the children to create spring art with their treasure. Be sure to talk about what they noticed and observed along the way.

[Sensory Play Outdoors](#)

The ECE Network is hosting four webinars this quarter:

- March 29, Beth Edwards will provide an Overview of the ECE Network, resources, future meetups, and the significance of outdoor connections for children's health.
- April 9, Jill Bienenstock of Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds, will discuss outdoor unstructured play and its impact on literacy skills.
- April 19: Mary Jo Greene of Made Greene will present on gardening strategies for preschoolers.
- May 31, Mat Dusza of Green Space Playgrounds will talk about the power of outdoor learning environments to support movement and child development.

Register now for these informative sessions aimed at promoting outdoor engagement for young children.

[ECE Events](#)

