



NURTURED ROOTS

Program and Curricular Overview

Our Vision

When children have regular opportunities to explore and build relationships with the natural world, they develop not only ecological knowledge, but also a sense of connection, responsibility, and care. Through Nurtured Roots, children learn to see themselves as part of the living world—and as people who can help care for it. Our vision is that every child who is part of Nurtured Roots develops a deeper sense of belonging: to themselves, to their community, and to the Earth.

Learning Outdoors

At Nurtured Roots, the natural world is not simply the setting for learning—it is one of our teachers. Children spend meaningful time in the garden observing, exploring, building, creating, questioning, and solving problems. By embracing the rhythms of the seasons and learning from the garden around them, children develop independence, resilience, curiosity, and a deeper sense of belonging to the places they inhabit.

Authentic Connections

Authentic connections are at the heart of Nurtured Roots. Our teachers take the time to know each child, observing their interests, readiness, and individual learning profile while gathering meaningful data to understand how they learn best. Children work in small groups during instructional blocks tailored to their skill levels, with the right balance of support and challenge to help each learner grow.

We build a culture of care and empathy by cultivating trust, guiding children through gentle and restorative conflict resolution, and supporting them in understanding the needs and experiences beneath their behaviors.

Thematic Units

We explore six thematic units, each spanning five weeks. Each theme provides a unifying framework for our community circles and opportunities to reflect on and make meaning from our learning.

Theme 1: Inner Self

Theme 2: Outer Self

Theme 3: Community

Theme 4: Change

Theme 5: Growth

Theme 6: Perspective

Daily Rhythm

A sense of what a typical day looks like, including our routines, learning experiences, and time for play, exploration, and connection.

9:00-9:30 Free Play and Check In

9:30-9:50 Community Circle

9:50-10:20 Ecology

10:20-10:50 Read Aloud / Literature Circles

10:50-11:20 Free Play

11:20-11:50 Math in Nature

11:50-12:30 Lunch/Recess

12:30-1:15 Art

1:15-1:50 Music and Movement

1:50-2:00 Closing Circle

Community Circle

We open each day with a community circle—a time to connect and prepare for the day ahead. Activities include collaborative games, group songs, daily questions and intentional practice of social-emotional skills.

Ecology

Our Ecology curriculum draws on the [Walking Curriculum](#) from imaginED, an approach to learning that engages walking as a starting point for exploration and discovery. Children learn by slowing down, noticing their surroundings, asking questions, and making connections across subjects. Through this approach, they develop curiosity, observation skills, confidence, and a deeper sense of connection to their place and community.

Literacy

Through read-alouds and literature circles, children strengthen comprehension, oral language, communication, and critical-thinking skills. They build vocabulary, make predictions and inferences, retell and discuss stories, explore characters and themes, support their ideas with evidence from the text, and build on one another's thinking.

Math in Nature

Math in Nature draws on a curriculum developed by Outdoor Learning, bringing mathematical concepts to life through hands-on exploration. In the fall semester children focus on number sense and measurement—counting seeds and plants, measuring height and growth, estimating quantities, comparing data, exploring area and perimeter, and using graphs, patterns, and simple calculations to make sense of what they observe. In the spring, children build on these skills through geometry and design, using shapes, angles, measurement, and spatial reasoning to design garden beds, map growing spaces, and plan structures for a garden.

Art in Nature

Art in Nature uses the garden and surrounding landscape as a living studio. Children develop observation and artistic skills through contour drawing, watercolor, and pastel, learning to see shapes, color blocks, lines, textures, and fine details in the landscape. They experiment with layering color, drawing from observation, and translating what they see to create expressive representations of the landscape.

Music and Movement

Children explore the importance of movement and the ways it supports their physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Through collaborative and cooperative games, dancing, instrument play, and movement routines, children build strength, coordination, and body awareness.

Children's Garden Council

Children come together as a Children's Garden Council to consider: *How can we make the garden more regenerative and welcoming?* Children come together as a Children's Garden Council to consider guiding questions such as: How are we connected to the living world, and how can we care for the places we belong to? What can we do to make our garden greener, healthier, and more biodiverse? What gifts can we offer in return for all that the land gives us? What can the natural world teach us about change, growth, and resilience? And how can we use what we learn in our garden to imagine and create a more caring community? They listen to one-another's perspectives, collaborate, make decisions together, and design a miniature garden model that can serve as an example for other neighborhoods. Through this process, children practice social and emotional competencies while developing a sense of agency and stewardship for their community.