



CASE STUDIES AND EXPLANATION NOTES

BEST PRACTICE & SEVEN QUALITIES OF THE NATURE PEDAGOGUE



Erasmus+

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CONTENTS

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten, Scotland 4

Case Study

Reflecting on Family Books and Learning Stories..... 6

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten

Benefit Risk Assessment 8

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten

Boldon Nursery School – Outdoor Nursery, England 10

Case Study

Inspiring Young Writers – Making Charcoal 12

Boldon Nursery School – Outdoor Nursery

Tree Climbing 14

Boldon Nursery School – Outdoor Nursery

Hval Gård Naturbarnehage, Norway 16

Case Study

Skiing Activities 18

Hval Gård Naturbarnehage

Fishing 20

Hval Gård Naturbarnehage

Lesní klub Jurta, Czech Republic. 22

Case Study

Working with Tools – Knives & Saws. 24

Lesní klub Jurta

Producing Elderflower Syrup 26

Lesní klub Jurta

AUCLONE NATURE KINDERGARTEN, SCOTLAND

Case Study

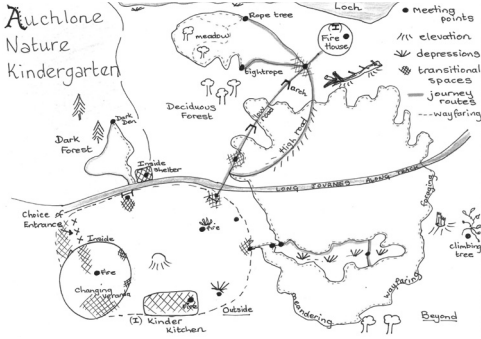


A LITTLE BIT BACKGROUND ABOUT AUCLONE

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten is an award winning early years centre (for 2 to 5 year olds) based near Crieff in Scotland. The children spend over 80% of their time outdoors while at Auchlone. Being a nature kindergarten is so much more than that. Whether we are inside, outside or beyond, we use nature to learn and provide children with authentic opportunities that will benefit them for the rest of their lives.

In 2006 Mindstretchers opened the first outdoor Nature Kindergarten in Scotland, Whistlebrae. The site later moved

to Auchlone Nature Kindergarten near Crieff, Scotland, in 2009. The implementation of the Nature Kindergarten philosophy has resulted in Auchlone being considered sector leading and recognised internationally. Over the last few years Auchlone has been a finalist and winner for many different awards, including NMT's Outdoor Learning Environment 2016 and Nursery World's Nursery of the Year 2016.



PLEASE, CONTACT US FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AT

www.mindstretchers.co.uk

SEE FOOTAGE FROM AUCLONE AT <https://youtu.be/SxWlPeUu6x4>

NOTE FROM THE MINDSTRETCHERS CEO CLAIRE WARDEN



Claire Warden, Mindstretchers CEO, says: "We in Auchlone aim to:

- provide a safe and stimulating environment in which children can feel happy and secure,
- provide children with a very naturalistic environment indoors, in the garden and in the wild woods where they are encouraged and supported to take risks and become the risk assessors,
- encourage the emotional, social, physical, creative and intellectual development of children both indoors and outdoors,
- promote the welfare of children and encourage their independence through the use of appropriate praise and reassurance,
- encourage positive attitudes regarding self and others, and develop confidence and self-esteem,
- create opportunities for both indoor and outdoor play which, at times, is challenging both physically and mentally,
- encourage children to explore, appreciate and respect their environment,
- provide opportunities to stimulate interest and imagination,
- extend children's abilities to communicate ideas and feelings in a variety of ways,
- promote a close relationship with parents and the community,
- promote liaison between the Kindergarten and local Primary schools."

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO US: THE LEARNING PROCESS

We are often asked how we are preparing children for school if "all they do is play outside." We may not be doing worksheets, but we are always learning. Children's voices and the process of learning are recorded in Talking and Thinking Floorbooks®, a method developed by

Claire Warden. These books are created with the children; they share their ideas and contribute their understanding at their own level. They document group learning experiences and value each child as an individual recording their progress and understanding throughout. Families are

invited to come in regularly and share the Floorbooks with their children. The children all have individual learning stories which include documentation of their learning journeys.

WORKING WITH FAMILIES AND TRANSITION HOME TO KINDERGARTEN

Families know their child best and so communication between parents and staff is crucial. Care is taken to involve parents/carers in all aspects of children's progress through encouraging parents to look at displays, floorbooks, family books and inviting them to parents evenings or by having an open door policy.

This step is recognised as being of great importance and staff work to ensure that starting nursery is a happy, flexible experience for both child and parent. Every effort is made to ensure that a new child feels welcome and quickly develops a sense of "belonging" for the Kindergarten.

VALUING THE WORK YOUR CHILD CREATES – WE CREATE CREATORS!

We celebrate the process of creativity and not just the end product. Children of this age are still developing their gross and fine motor skills and the manipulation of small tools takes time and effort. As an environmentally friendly nursery we encourage transient art and children can produce amazingly intricate displays with natural materials which are photographed to record the process.

CURRICULUM

Our curriculum is nature based, following

the "Pre Birth to Three" for children aged 2 to 3 years and the Scottish "Curriculum for Excellence" for children from 3 to 18 years.



"I only wish there were more nurseries like this – that the values and services from Auchlone were universal. I cannot commend them highly enough and though I would like to give critical feedback to improve service... I cannot fault anything they do."

— PARENT INTERVIEWED BY CARE INSPECTORATE, 2017

REFLECTING ON FAMILY BOOKS AND LEARNING STORIES

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten

QUALITIES DEMONSTRATED

Reflective

Looking back and sharing memories and having further thoughts using the photographs and quotes from the children's family books to stimulate discussion.

Collaboration

The staff share the facilitation role of discussion, helping children question and evaluate their own learning.

Skills and knowledge

Children and staff share their knowledge – both vocabulary and understanding.

The children look back on the family book as staff read out children's quotes and point out the drawings and photographs from previous experiences



EXPLANATION OF BEST PRACTICE


This footage shows staff reflecting with children upon their Family Books (or Profiles), in a quieter moment of the day. These children are aged 3-5 years old.

Reflection and reviewing our learning is a big part of the work we do at Auchlone Nature Kindergarten.

Children can do this alone, independently with their friends or with the help of

staff who read out statements or discuss drawings and photographs to help stimulate memory recall.

In the footage the staff sit with their key children, and occasionally one of their friends, to talk about their favorite past experiences and help them recall the learning that took place.

 **See footage** Reflecting on Family Books and Learning Stories at <https://youtu.be/FFwzMgOKc5A>

WHY THIS EXPERIENCE?

The staff work with the children to create their own Family Book; these are compiled chronologically using Learning Stories to record their time at Auchlone Nature Kindergarten. These books document an individual child's learning alongside Talking and Thinking Floorbooks (the group learning experiences). These methods of documentation and consultation have been developed by Mindstretchers Ltd over 20 years and include the use of Talking Tubs, Talking and Thinking Trees and 3D mindmaps™.

Staff use Floorbooks and Family Books as a reflective tool to evaluate past experience and embed prior learning (Metacognition). They are also used to plan future experiences. During and following a discussion with the children, staff make observations, scribe children's quotes or reactions and then write PLODS (Possible Lines of Development) to move the learning further forward. (For further information visit www.mindstretchers.co.uk about Talking and Thinking Floorbooks/ Participatory Planning)

THE BOY BECOMES ANIMATED THAT HE HAS FOUND A TRICERATOPS. THEREFORE, JESS JOINS THE CONVERSATION DESCRIBING HOW HE MATCHED THE TOY DINOSAURS WITH THE ONES IN THE BOOK.



This footage shows two staff members reflecting upon the children's individual Family Books during a quieter moment of the day, with three children aged 3-5 years old.

Jess (practitioner 1) shows excitement at seeing the dinosaur learning story. She asks the boy: "What kind do we have here?"

A: "A Brachiosaurus."

J: "...and how do you know that?"

A: "It has a very big, long neck."

J: "Like a giraffe?"

A: "Yes... their necks are taller than a giraffe."

Jess then turns the page and starts to discuss that he was looking at the colours. The boy becomes animated that he has found a Triceratops. Therefore, Jess joins the conversation saying he matched the toy dinosaurs with the ones in the book. The Triceratops has three horns.

We then see Mona (practitioner 2) talking with two girls. "What are we up to here?"

I: "Building."

Mona: "What is that?"

I: "A cement mixer" She then describes what she was doing with the cement, where she put it and what she did with it."

We return to look at A's book. He asks: "Why do I have no waterproofs on?"

Jess: "Do you think it was a warmer day? Maybe spring or summer?"

A: "Spring time" she agrees with him. They compare it to today's weather.

We finally return to Mona and the girls narrating the process of making pot pourri".

I then identifies the best one.

Mona says she will buy that clay again.

NOTE FROM THE PRACTITIONER



Mona Morrow, Auchlone Nature Kindergarten Manager says:

"We believe children learn best by reflecting upon their own learning and seeing photographs of themselves undertaking experiences, talking about their ideas or drawing pictures into a book.

Just think how empowering it is for a child to know that at the age of two or three, they are the author and illustrator of a book! They see that their words are so important that an adult has written them down straight into their very own Family Book. Other key people, like parent/carers or friends can also add to their book. It is strong way to form a home-setting link.

The children, families and staff at Auchlone love the Family Books; we feel there is something so valuable at leafing through the pages of a book with friends and colleagues. In an age of the paper free and technical revolution, we thrive on the experiences that celebrate the written word. The books are treasured for many years after they leave us."

BENEFIT RISK ASSESSMENT

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten

QUALITIES DEMONSTRATED

Skills and knowledge

Give children the skills to identify the positives of an experience, the hazards or associated risks and the precautions to keep us safe.

Open, not dominant

Allowing children to discuss and identify their own precautions to stay safe.

Happy and secure outside

When we know how to stay safe, it reassures us and we become happy and content in our environment.

Respectful

Encourage children to self risk assess.

Children undertake Benefit Risk Assessment by answering:

What is good about the experience?

What do we need to be careful of?

How do we stay safe?



EXPLANATION OF BEST PRACTICE

This footage shows two members of staff working with five children aged 4- 6 years old.

They have stopped by the gate and fence created by the children, next to the burn (stream) to undertake a Benefit Risk Assessment.

The practitioner asks each child what they will enjoy about going to the burn. What they may need to be careful of when they

travel to and arrive at the burn. Finally, how they will keep themselves and the others safe when they go to the burn.

Each child shares their ideas. They then approach the burn and use the techniques discussed to get down the slope. They then test the depth and speed the water is travelling before they continue with their activity of a boat race.

 **See footage** Benefit Risk Assessment at <https://youtu.be/ou1DOh6XHUu>

WHY THIS EXPERIENCE?

At Mindstretchers we use Benefit Risk Assessment. Risk assessing in the past focused on removal of hazard and was often undertaken by the adult. In Benefit Risk Assessment we aim to reduce risk to as safe level but not remove it entirely.

Maslow in 1943 developed the 'Hierarchy of Needs'. If children have not met their physiological needs (food, water, sleep, clothing) and do not feel safe, they will learn very little, if anything. They will be too concerned about what may happen to them in a new or different environment.

By involving children in Benefit Risk Assessment they are aware of the dangers and how they will stay safe.

B: "WE HAVE TO CHECK IF IT'S OK."

M: "HOW DO WE DO THAT?"

F: "WE PUT A STICK IN FIRST... IT WILL TELL US HOW DEEP IT IS".

This footage shows two staff members working with a group of four to six year old children. They discuss and then physically assess the benefits, hazards and risks of going to the burn (stream) and how we will stay safe (precautions). The practitioner asks the children: "What is it that's good about going to the burn?"

B: "We can sail boats."

F: "We can watch the sea go in different directions."

One of the children tells us we need to check if the water is ok. Another suggests we use a stick to check this and a further child contributes that the stick will show us how deep the burn (stream) is.

D suggests a final benefit is we can also play.

The practitioner then moves onto discuss what we need to be careful of, beyond the depth and asks the children to identify the associated precautions.

"We could fall in... we stay back and lean backwards."

"We don't run... we walk."

"On the slope... Slide down or walk carefully or hold onto the trees."

Finally, the children are reminded why we have stopped at the gate. Don't go through without an adult.

We then go to explore the burn. The children carry the branches. The children try different techniques to get down the bank of the burn.

They then use the stick to test the depth and discuss the speed of the river.



NOTE FROM THE PRACTITIONER



Kate Hookham, Senior Trainer from Auchlone Nature Kindergarten says:

"I have trained adults and children in risk assessment for many years. Often documentation focuses on the negative of 'all the things that can go wrong'. Benefit Risk Assessment focuses on positive language. We discuss what we will learn and experience (these maybe Physical, Intellectual, Linguistic, Emotional and/or Social).

When children take ownership and responsibility for their own safety it reassures and empowers them. It also means an adult is not directing children, but they are self-regulating themselves fully aware of the potential hazards and risks of a situation and how to keep themselves and others safe. Adults are there to reinforce practice but not to dominate. Children often air on the side of caution, especially if they have limited life experience of the situation. Adults are there to balance the risks and benefits to a sensible and manageable level.

I really believe this is why Auchlone (luckily) has minimal incidents as children are managing themselves, with adults supervising supportively. The three questions keep children safe, paperwork does not!"

BOLDON NURSERY SCHOOL – OUTDOOR NURSERY, ENGLAND

Case Study



A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Baldon Nursery School-Outdoor Nursery is a Local Authority maintained nursery school, one of only 4 in our Local Authority and set in an area of high deprivation. The focus in all nursery schools is on narrowing the attainment gap between children to enable all children to have the best start in life, making outstanding progress during their time in nursery. The school, by law, needs its own Headteacher, who is a qualified teacher with innovative Leadership and Management skills and a qualified teacher to lead the teaching and learning. Our approach to learning outdoors is unique, and although some other settings offer 'forest school' sessions, there are very few nursery schools in the country who offers experiences outdoors for 80% or more of the time- in all weathers. In England, Nursery Schools are inspected by Ofsted to the same framework as Primary schools, carried out by Ofsted or HMI inspectors. The school is currently

judged to be outstanding for the second consecutive time, although we work in a way that is so different to everywhere else. This is because despite pushing the boundaries and following what we believe is right of young children, the teaching and

**A home from home,
celebrating childhood in and
with nature – all day, everyday,
whatever the weather.**

learning is recognised as 'high quality' and 'innovative' seeing young children learn in nature without exception. In our culture, children being outside particularly in cold and wet conditions is not seen as 'acceptable' and in addition to that families and even professionals have great

concerns over young children taking risks, due to significant health and safety restraints alongside 'a claim culture'. This making our daily practice very different and outside of the 'norm' in our country - something we are very proud of!



80% OF THE CHILD'S NURSERY TIME IS OUTDOORS

THE CHILDREN'S LEARNING HAPPENS IN SYNCHRONISATION WITH THE SEASONS. IN THE AUTUMN TERM WE FORAGE AND COLLECT TREASURES AND STORE THEM FOR THE HARD WINTER. IN THE WINTER MONTHS THE BARE TREES DRAW OUR EYES INTO LINEAR MOTION AND TO THE DETAIL BEHIND.

AN ETHOS THAT INSPIRES A RESPECT FOR NATURE

AS SPRING ARRIVES THE CHILDREN CONTINUE TO GROW AND CHANGE, FLOURISHING AND EXPANDING INTO THE WORLD - JUST LIKE THE NEW BUDS OPENING ON THE PLANTS AND TREES. AS WE TAKE TIME AND SPACE TO ENSURE THE CHILDREN LEARN AT THEIR OWN PACE AND RE-VISIT EXISTING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE CONTINUOUSLY WE PREPARE FOR AN EXCITING SUMMER TERM.

IN THE SUMMER THE CHILDREN BEGIN THEIR TRANSITION INTO SCHOOL AGED 4, HAVING MADE THE STRONGEST LINKS BETWEEN EXPERIENCES THAT ENSURE SKILLS FOR LIFE.

THESE TRANSFERABLE SKILLS DEVELOPED WITH AND THROUGH NATURE BUILD THE FOUNDATIONS FOR FUTURE LEARNING.

At Baldon the children have a garden space that has been developed to allow for wild and natural spaces that they can experience and be part of all day, every day in nature that is ever changing throughout the seasons. Although not a forest or open meadow, it is an oasis in the centre of a built up colliery town. Despite having houses on all sides the space is big and uninterrupted with special places bursting with opportunities for play and exploration at its best. As well as children, our space is home to ducks and chickens who live in the allotment. We grow our own crops to harvest and eat (and often cook on the fire) and bake with our hens eggs - every child needs a birthday cake! As well as this we trudge through long grass and manoeuvre tricky terrain, as well climb tall trees reach-

ing new heights daily. The garden is a haven for wildlife and mini-beasts, something the children get to experience first-hand, helping them to make sense of their world. Our fire house really is the 'hub' of the nursery - a shelter but also an important meeting place to chat and share food. We keep warm in the winter by roaring flames and enjoy soup prepared by the children, we make our own charcoal pencils from willow and as a result we are inspired to write and make marks. Each of the special spaces from the mud kitchen to our beach which replicates our coastal cultures encourages the children to challenge themselves, form friendships and develop learning



across our whole National Curriculum - this includes developing their self-esteem and confidence but also their specific skills such as maths and literacy. We climb the tallest trees, splash in the deepest puddles and immerse ourselves completely in everything nature has to offer - dancing in the heavy rain or drinking hot chocolate by fire in freezing temperatures, holding ice in our warm hands and watching it melt. Real experiences mean real learning and life-long skills for all!

PLEASE, CONTACT US FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AT

www.baldonnureryschool.co.uk

SEE FOOTAGE FROM BOLDON AT <https://youtu.be/XzsdFZRPlrY>

NOTE FROM THE HEADTEACHER



Sue Stokoe, Headteacher, on inspiring the use of nature in her setting and the staff's pedagogy:

"To create a place where children have time and space to explore their interests and fascinations, where childhood is celebrated. To use nature, its seasons and elements as a provocation for the learning for children, parents and staff - this continues to embed and inspire our practice."

INSPIRING YOUNG WRITERS – MAKING CHARCOAL

Boldon Nursery School – Outdoor Nursery

QUALITIES DEMONSTRATED

Skills and knowledge

Supporting children to learn new skills through demonstrating, but also encouragement to explore and find out. Adults have visible skills and know how to support individuals appropriately.

Open, not dominant

In the footage Sam allows the child time and space to explore.

Happy and secure outside

All aspects of nature and the elements are embraced and brought to the child's attention.

Reflective

Sam summaries the key learning experiences and creates possible lines of development as she works.



EXPLANATION OF BEST PRACTICE

This footage demonstrates a child lighting the fire in the setting and planning to make charcoal. The child leads the learning and the adult supports the child to manage the risks of the fire, with awe and wonder at the impact the elements are having upon the process from start to finish.

As well as the adult teaching a skill and supporting the child to reflect upon their own progress, the adult ensures the child is making links to their already existing knowledge of the world around them. Through open ended questions and encouraging the child to recall and remember, the

experience becomes much more than a 'process'.

As the experience unfolds across the session, the importance of nature around the child is a key part of the engagement with the child at every opportunity – listening to the birds, feeling the wind on their skin and noticing how it makes the fire roar and then linking this experience to the season. The adult is prepared for work with children, equipped to respond with resources, tools and opportunities (wherever that may take them) – as well as an obvious joy being in the environment itself.

 **See footage** Inspiring Young Writers – Making Charcoal at <https://youtu.be/nGBngPVQJdc>

WHY THIS EXPERIENCE?

This is an experience that the children are part of from very early in their journey. After establishing respect and understanding for the fire, and confidence in their ability to light it and manage the risk we begin to use it for a purpose, whether that is cooking, keeping warm or creating.

In this example the experience develops many skills, alongside inspiring children to write with their own pencil.

“I DID IT! I REALLY DID IT! I MADE MY OWN PENCIL.”

A GROUP OF CHILDREN SPEND A DAY, WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS MAKING THEIR OWN WRITING TOOL – USING THEIR EXISTING SKILLS WITH FIRE AND TOOLS.

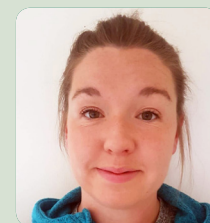
The group of children share a friendship and this is key. One of the children is the 'planner' and the adult supports her to lead the learning throughout. This works well because the children are comfortable with each other and it is natural for them to work this way, a group of children put together by the adult without a relationship would be very different. As the children use the whittling tool, the adult is careful to correct the skill and support technique. The adult works openly with the children and is not in 'control' instead of dominating the conversation she uses carefully chosen moments to enhance the thinking, and then to scaffold the learning through encouraging the children to listen and respond to each other – instead of relying upon the adults responses. It is evident from the video footage that the children are confident to share their ideas both with the adult and the other

children, this comes from a strong, reciprocal relationship that has been built upon and respected since the child started their journey. There is a distinct link to each part of the process and time is taken to draw the child's attention to the effect they are having upon the materials, and the changes that they have made to natural objects through the elements (fire) and use of tools.

Although there is an end product in this footage, often this will take much longer than a day and is something the child will re-visit over time as their skills increase. The risks involved when using the fire in the setting are supported by knowledgeable and confident practitioners, secure in their own understanding of how to ensure children benefit from experiences like this one. Fire and tools are not feared, but respected and understood.



NOTE FROM THE PRACTITIONER



Sam Kerr, Senior Educator from Boldon Outdoor Nursery says:

"This experience is magical from a practitioner's perspective, as well as the child's. The ability to use nature and the elements to create a mark making tool supports the children to make connections between materials and the world. Throughout each step - from chopping down the willow that has grown in our garden, to watching the colours change as the bark has been stripped back - to then using the fire and a simple

processes to change its properties becomes complex and thought provoking. As the adult I see the whole process through from start to finish, ensuring the group revisit at each stage and look back on the things they have achieved, as well as how nature has impacted their work. Too see how much the children want to write and record their ideas with their own pencil is inspiring!"

The group of children have complete ownership of the process, materials and space – time to see things through is very important.

TREE CLIMBING

Boldon Nursery School – Outdoor Nursery

QUALITIES DEMONSTRATED

Open, not dominant

The adult's body language is supportive and not overpowering - not having the answers or instructions but supporting the child to challenge themselves.

Happy and secure outside

Sam uses her own passion for tree climbing as a child to inspire her practice.

Synergy with nature

Sam encourages the children to listen to nature, feel the elements and take full advantage of the new perspective.

Collaboration

The staff work supportively to ensure they work in areas they feel strong and passionate.



EXPLANATION OF BEST PRACTICE

This footage demonstrates three children climbing one of the trees.

The children are all at different points in their own journeys into strength, confidence and managing risks and the adult is careful to change her role depending upon the child she is supporting. The children learn at the beginning of their experiences that the adult is not there to 'catch' them when they fall - but instead teach them the skills needed to climb safely.

The adults are very up front about the risks involved and they discuss quite naturally what will happen if they fall from a

significant height. The child knows they are responsible for their own safety and with that comes an much reduced chance of injury or mistake - the child does not want to get hurt and they will do everything they can to avoid falling from the tree. The adult does not tell the child where to put their feet or which direction to take, they offer advice when the child needs to change direction or push a little higher than they've ever been before.

This necessity for trust in the relationship is paramount to any tree climbing experience, the child knows the adult is always there to advise and support.

 **See footage** Tree Climbing at <https://youtu.be/lkxbm7v1JfE>

WHY THIS EXPERIENCE?

Tree climbing is physical learning for a child at its best, This experience demonstrates the control and strength children can achieve with practice and freedom to explore.

Before they will ever be able to hold a pencil and write with control, a child at this age needs to have full control over their bodies and strength in their core muscles - arms, shoulders, joints and coordination are key if they will ever hold a pen or pencil comfortably - skills for life that will transfer to many other experiences.

"I KNOW HOW TO CLIMB TO THE TOP! WELL NOT RIGHT TO THE TOP, THE SKINNY BRANCHES AREN'T SAFE – JUST FOR BIRDS."

A GROUP OF CHILDREN TEST THEIR STRENGTH, ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER AND REACH NEW HEIGHTS

The footage demonstrates how effective children are in supporting each other.

The adult encourages the children to have control and as a result they are able to teach their friends new skills from their own experiences and feel good about themselves.

The children encounter very different problems as they are each on their own physical and emotional journey, and this is the key role for the adult to support this for each individual - this is not one size fits all. As they work to reach new heights the adult is connected to the surroundings and the amazing wonders that are occurring in nature, listening and feeling like a child does. It would be easy to start an experience like this with one goal - to reach a new place or learn a new skills. But instead, she draws the children's attention

to the smell, sounds and sights going on around them. From feeling the bark and questioning it's lumpy, bumpy texture - to listening to the birdsong in the branches above their heads. The children connect their existing knowledge to this and begin to theorise about how birds climb so well and how they indeed manage it without any arms. It is through this questioning and making connections that the adult supports the children to learn more about nature, comparing their own place in the space to the wildlife or indeed the things growing and changing with the season, It is Spring in England so whilst up the tree you get the best view of new buds exploding into life and birds collecting for their nests.



NOTE FROM THE PRACTITIONER



Sam Kerr, Senior Educator from Boldon Outdoor Nursery says:

"If as an adult you feel ill at the thought of a child reaching heights above your head and control then supporting this kind of experience is not for you. As an individual, tree climbing is something I did as a child and feel confident to support and encourage, I have an ability to trust the children and not worry that they will fall. And if they do fall, then it was an accident that they have been taught to manage well. As well as the huge impact it has upon their physical strength, it is so fulfilling to see a child's responses when they reach the top, achieve a new height or notice their increasing skills - that smile is worth one thousand words. Without this experience where will a child gain a new perspective, learn how to respond to the weather and seasons and take risks that will benefit their learning 10 fold?"

The children begin their journey moving across branches on a fallen tree, learning how to manage their bodies and coordinate their movements.

HVAL GÅRD NATURBARNEHAGE, NORWAY

Case Study



A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE KINDERGARTEN

Hval Gård and Vepsebolet barnehager is community owned kindergartens run as one unit. Inside this Unit we find Hval Gård Naturbarnehage.

36 Children, aged 4-6 years are filling the groups. They have a base in purpose built buildings without electrical heating. They are all close to the forests and the sea. The Children and Staff are outside all year and all day. We are situated in some of the most picturesque areas of the Asker community, with short walks to public transport. We also have our own mini

buses and boats to access sites further afield.

In our Kindergartens the Children learn that it is better to be outside than inside. In the last year before School, all the Children in Hval Gård barnehage attend the Naturegroups.

We follow the Asker Communities basic values; Openness, Credibility and Mutual Respect.



100% OF THE CHILD'S NURSERY TIME IS OUTDOORS

A DAILY LIFE OUTSIDE, AWAY FROM HOME, CELEBRATING CHILDHOOD, IN AND WITH NATURE, ALL DAY – EVERY DAY!

In our Kindergartens we like to accentuate that the childhood period has its own value, and shall not be seen as only a training arena for adulthood. Children are individuals, with their own dreams, thoughts and values here and now, which shall be respected and valued at all times. We wish them to experience a culture of "Yes", where they are being met by the "Grown Ups" with the attitude that everything you suggest is seen as a new possibility and are welcomed.

Our pedagogy

We follow the methodology of Mind-stretchers "Talking and Thinking Floorbooks", which is a method of documentation developed by Claire Warden, based on the children's own participation and direction in the process of learning. It is of vital importance that the staff conduct their practice at the children's level and follow the child's interests and questions by inspiring them to try to find their own solutions, and by not giving the "correct" answer immediately. We do the documentation in big Floorbooks where the children and the staff contribute together.

Our Staff

We have both male and female staff that are either trained pedagogues or educated as child carers. They are all aware that you are able to perform the same activities outside and inside, plus a range of experiences you can only do outside.

All of them are committed to practice our basic attitudes in the right order:

The first matter is:

The consideration to the child is always the most important thing!

The second matter is:

The consideration of the work place!

The third matter is:

All other considerations are set thereafter!



NOTE FROM THE HEADTEACHER



Anders Farstad, Manager from Hval Gård Naturbarnehage, in discussing the inspiring use of nature in his setting and the pedagogy:

"We are so fortunate to live in a Country like Norway, with long and strong traditions in using the wild Nature during the whole year, through all seasons and always to make the best of different weather and temperature conditions. We are harvesting whatever we can from the forests, the sea and what

we can grow ourselves, using it for food and decorations, firewood and instruments, in whatever way it is possible. The Children learn how to handle different tools, and how to dress to keep warm during every possible weather condition. They are presented with new and exciting challenges regularly and love to push their personal boundaries. In May they all go off for a two day and overnight stay without their parents. They are become very confident and independent boys and girls.

*It is with pride we can say that **our Children like it more to be outside than inside!**"*

Our vision and core values:

Learning for life – diversity of possibilities with outdoor life, local history and traditions.



SKIING ACTIVITIES

EXPLANATION NOTES

Hval Gård Naturbarnehage

QUALITIES DEMONSTRATED

Happy and secure outside

The adults body language is supportive and not overpowering - not having the answers or being directive. They are standing out as good role models and supporting the child to challenge themselves.

Skills and knowledge

The adult is just helping and Gently guiding when the children need it. There are no "screaming" instructors. The adult lets the child lead the way, based on looking at others and asking for guidance when needed.

Collaboration

The adults are aware that they must be observant and follow up every child individually. In most cases they divide the children between them before the activity.

The children begin their skiing journey moving on flat ground, then mastering small slopes up and down, learning how to manage their bodies and coordinate their movements.



EXPLANATION OF BEST PRACTICE

This film demonstrates how children are enjoying the playful activity of cross-country skiing. The children are all at different points in their own journey, related to strength, confidence, managing risks and skills. The adult is careful to change her role depending upon the child she or he is supporting. The children learn at the beginning of their experiences that the adult is not there to 'catch' them when they fall - but instead teach them the skills needed to manage their skiing activities. The adults are aware about the risks involved, but see this as normal daily activities, and with very little 'real' risk. They do carry with them a small first-aid kit, in case anything more dramatic should happen. The child will naturally experiment with

their own abilities and increasing skills, and regularly experience a fall or two during the activities. They also know that the snow is mostly soft and not too hard to fall onto. This is real learning by doing, growing from your own mistakes and watching how others manage themselves.

The adult does not tell the child the best way to perform or which direction to take. They offer advice when the child asks for it, or give a helping hand if wanted and needed. This necessity for trust in the relationship is paramount to any active experience. The child knows the adult is always there to advise and support.

 See footage Skiing Activities at <https://youtu.be/sQbQjPS8DFQ>



AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THE PICTURES THERE IS FULLACTIVITY FROM THE EARLY MORNING TO LATE AFTERNOON!

A GROUP OF CHILDREN TEST THEIR STRENGTH, ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER AND REACH NEW HEIGHTS

The footage demonstrates how effective children are in supporting and learning from each other. The adult encourages the children to have control and as a result they are able to teach their friends new skills from their own experiences and feel good about themselves. The children encounter very different problems as they are each on their own physical and emotional journey, and it is the key role for the adult to support this for each individual - this is not one size fits all. As they work to reach new heights the adult is connected to the surroundings and the amazing wonders that are occurring in nature, listening and feeling like a child does.

It would be easy to start an experience like this with one goal - to reach a new place or learn a new skill. But instead, she/he draws the children's attention to the smell,

sounds and sights going on around them. From feeling the snow and questioning it's smooth and changing texture - to see how the snow covers up on the branches above their heads.

The children connect their existing knowledge to this and begin to theorise about where the snow comes from, and in which way we use it for play and joy. It is through this questioning and making connections that the adult supports the children to learn more about nature. Comparing their own place in the space to the wild nature surrounding us all. How can we manage out in the cold winter weather and still be comfortable? The things growing and changing with the season. It is important to enjoy the season before the snow melts and spring comes along. Joy to all!



NOTE FROM THE PRACTITIONER



Anders Farstad, Manager from Hval Gård Naturbarnehage says:

"If as an adult you feel it is difficult to watch the children strive to manage their lack of skiing abilities, and not being able to restrict your advice to the times you are asked for it, or you see a desperate need for it, - you should probably not be the one with the children on this activity. The best way to influence the children, is to be a good role model. So go on with your skiing

activities at a stage linked up to the children`s level of ability.

And when they fall, just ask them to get on with it. Teach them how to get up and carry on. Without this experience where will a child gain a new perspective, learn how to respond to the weather and seasons and take risks that will benefit their learning 10 fold?"

FISHING

Hval Gård Naturbarnehage

QUALITIES DEMONSTRATED

Synergy with nature

Norwegians have a strong tradition in being in synergy with nature. Our main focus is to live by nature.

Skills and knowledge

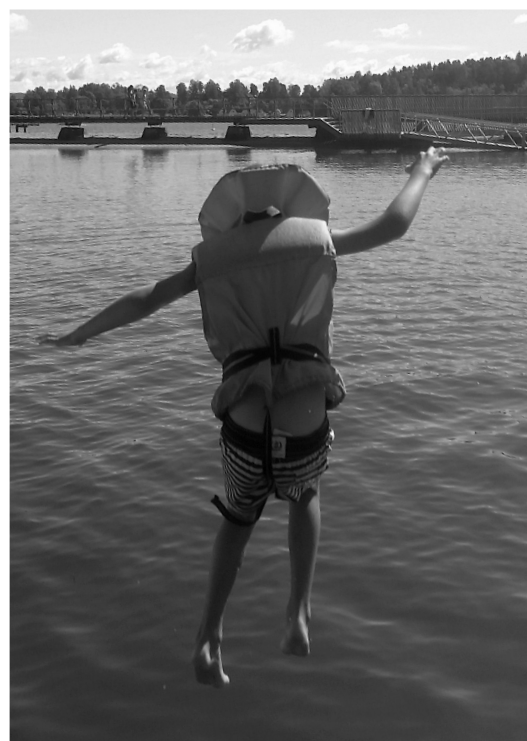
The pedagogues use their passion for fishing, to inspire the children and share their knowledge of this old tradition.

Feel at home in nature

The staff love being outside, learning and sharing knowledge about the Norwegian traditions.

Respectful

Being in and with nature, inspire the children in collecting food from nature and see the whole process.



EXPLANATION OF BEST PRACTICE

This film demonstrates a nature pedagogue and children going fishing.

The children experience the old Norwegian tradition of fishing. They learn where to collect their own food, how to catch the fish, what to do with the catch and how to behave nearby water. The children are learning the whole process of fishing. From making ready the fishing net, travelling down to the sea, taking the rowing-boat into the water, and to find the right place to launch the fishing net into the sea. Then the children have to wait until the next day and come back to pull up the fishing net, to see if they got any fish.

This process takes a long time and the children learn to wait for the results, to

think and talk about what the results will be tomorrow. They learn what to do with the fish we collect, and different ways to prepare the fish for eating. The children also learn about how to behave next to the sea and the rules to follow..

It is important to talk with the children about the process of fishing and to let them ask questions, to let them have conversations about what's happening and what is going to happen. The children always have their life jackets on and know the risk of not having them on. They know the rules to manage themselves safely while on and next to the sea.

 **See footage** Fishing at https://youtu.be/uGN_nh9FGIA

WHY THIS EXPERIENCE?

This experience is important because it is an old Norwegian tradition to collect food and survive using nature since the times of the Vikings in this area. The environment around the kindergarten makes it very natural to go fishing with the children.

And it is important for the children to learn how and where you can catch the fish.

"I HAVE SEEN A REAL SHARK BEFORE... LOOK, THIS ONE IS VERY STICKY..."

"IT'S A COOOOD!!!"

The film demonstrates the whole process of fishing. The adults have to show the children positive interest through the process and in that way, the children will learn as they go through the process. The adult need to be open to any questions the children asks, and give the children time to think about and suggest possible answers.

With inspiring adults the children will develop a love of using nature for exploration and physical challenges.

The film shows children helping and supporting each other through the process with fishing. They learn to manage themselves and strengthen self-esteem by carrying out the tasks they receive. This leads to positive feelings and confidence.

They also get to feel the different elements around them, like the seawater, texture on the different fishes, the ebb and flow of the waves and the taste the fish.



The children achieve challenges that are adapted to their level of knowledge.

NOTE FROM THE PRACTITIONER



Kari Venke Sørø, Nature Pedagogue from Hval Gård Naturbarnehage says:

"The pedagogue's role in this process is to support, learn, have fun, to thrive with the nature elements and give the children a positive experience of fishing. The children need to experience risks for themselves, make mistakes and learn from it. That's how they will learn the risks and become strong individuals who know what to do in different situations, and environments they meet further along. The pedagogues are there for the children to advise and support them. It's important to know the children's different skills and to gently place them in situations to give a positive outcome to their problem solving."



LESNÍ KLUB JURTA, CZECH REPUBLIC

Case Study



A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE KINDERGARTEN

The Jurta Nature Kindergarten opened in 2010 with a great contribution from parents. In 2013 we were legally registered by the Czech Ministry of Education. And in 2017, due to the national legal act recognising forest kindergartens in the Czech Republic, we became equal to the other ordinary kindergartens.

Jurta resides on a farm in the outskirts of Děčín in the north of the Czech Republic. The kindergarten is located in rural area surrounded with forests, meadows and rivers. There are pigs, cattle, geese, donkeys and sheep on the farm. The children encounter the life and work on the farm every day. They can observe the work on a farm, help feeding animals and learn about everyday life of the animals during the whole year.

As a base we use a wooden furnished hut equipped with a stove and a large bunk bed for the youngest children to have an afternoon nap. In the base there is everything we need to keep the children comfortable, e.g. extra clothes, tools, games, books and other teaching aids. There is a large garden with a place for fire, spaces for play in nature and an orchard next to the base.

There are 30 registered children aged 3-6 years old and 5 qualified staff teachers in the kindergarten. There is also a primary school in the farm area and school-children regularly meet their friends from the kindergarten when they go to school.



NOTE FROM THE HEADTEACHER



Petra Tanglová, Headteacher of the JURTA NATURE KINDERGARTEN, says on inspiring the use of nature in her setting and the staff's pedagogy:

"Nature kindergartens are already preferred by many parents in the Czech Republic. Still there are some questions by adults: Do the children get enough of education and sufficient care in the nature? Won't they be cold outdoors? Again and again the questions get answered and doubts disappear. Parents can see how happy their children are and this is the highest value."

We in Jurta open up the nature space to the children. They are supported to grow up without overprotection. I believe this is the only way for them to become free, self-reliant and responsible human beings. We give them a chance to experience everything on their own. We give them time they need so much to explore and observe the world all around them. In my personal experience there is now no other way than the natural or forest one – as you wish to name it."

There is a balanced ratio of free play and guided activities for children.

PLEASE, CONTACT US FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AT

www.lesniklub.cz

SEE FOOTAGE FROM JURTA AT
<https://youtu.be/BMOx4iXJimY>

TIME OUTDOORS, HIKING IN THE FOREST, LEARNING IN AND WITH NATURE.

99% OF THE CHILD'S NURSERY TIME IS OUTDOORS. CHILDREN STAY INDOORS WHEN VISITING COMMUNITY FACILITIES LIKE LIBRARIES OR WORKSHOPS, AND DURING EXTREME WEATHER

We meet up in the garden around the base every morning. Children help to make and light a fire, taking care of it every day. During morning circle time together children split into two groups and at about nine o'clock we all set off to the surrounding nature spaces, often visiting favourite places in the woods and hills. Each place has its own name given by the children. In the afternoon, children play in the garden and help with jobs on the farm. They spend their afternoon enjoying free play or with seasonal activities like gardening or fruit picking. They also care for guinea pigs and rabbits.

Concept and vision

In Jurta Nature Kindergarten we offer education in natural conditions with plenty of outdoor activities, with opportunities to discuss children's own opinions and participate in the creation of the daily plan. We guide children to be responsible, self-reliant, self-confident team players ready to help others.

The teachers use a partnership and respectful approach to learning with the children. Relationships are based on mutual trust and dialogue. Children are encouraged to learn how to solve problems and how to talk to each other. The role of the adults is mostly supportive or they can help the child to find solutions if they need it.

Using real tools

Children work with real tools like a hand saw, carving knife or hammer and nails,



and with gardening equipment. They care about animals, carry out gardening and maintain the precious orchard plants. The children do many artistic activities to develop their talents and skills. They listen to and play music, they do fine arts and they play and watch their own theatre performances.

Engagement of parents

Co-operation and engagement of parents is very important to us. We invite the parents to be part of the kindergarten, share experiences or simply help maintaining and extending the kindergarten setting with their own skills. There are a number of events where parents (and/or grandparents) can participate and enjoy mutual experiences together with their children. Most appreciated in our setting are traditional events like an annual Family Orienteering Run in spring, Grandparents fairy tale reading, and our "Tea at five" gathering in summer. As well as this we

have voluntary work in the autumn working together in wood fuel gathering and cutting with a camp fire.

Challenging nature for the staff

We are happy to explore with children the challenging elements of nature, this is due to the staffs love of being in and with nature. The children then feel comfortable and safe around confident and happy adults. They see it's not just them learning something new, but also the teachers learn new things with them. We all enjoy new experiences every day together and how strong relationships develop.

It's the weather and nature who teach the children to adapt in various situations and overcome discomfort, such as extreme cold. On the other hand, nature is generous to us with its gifts, like fruits and vegetables planted, grown and nurtured by the children.

WORKING WITH TOOLS – KNIVES & SAWS

Lesní klub Jurta

QUALITIES DEMONSTRATED

Respectful

Support in mastering the work with knife and saw. Sensitive guiding of the children.

Skills and knowledge

The children learn how to work with a knife and a saw. They learn how to recognize the wood suitable to work with.

Open, not dominant

Adults offer advice, but instead of instructing they respect the children choice and are available to them for support. The children enjoy their space.



EXPLANATION OF BEST PRACTICE


There are always at least two teachers with the group of children aged from 3 to 6 years during this activity.

In the first part we can see the teacher working with a small group of children. They are producing a "tripod" for holding the camping pot. We have created a base to be able to boil water for tea or cocoa at this place. The children here are working with a saw and they are carving the grooves into the wood for the camping pot. The teacher assists them. She is giving advice regarding holding a saw to make the work comfortable and more effective, returning to original notches.

In the second part children are carving. We dedicate a lot of time to carving in our kindergarten. At the beginning you can see that we are thinking about what we are going to produce and about the suitable kind of wood using the book. Hazel is the wood used in this case. The children are learning how to choose a suitable material depending upon

its properties such as hard or soft, heavy or light. Next you can see children working with the saw, with the clippers and with the knife. The teachers are attending all of the time and they are supporting the children to manage the tasks safely and with good technique. They are showing them how to work accurately with the tools to improve their skills. In this example someone is producing a magic wand; another child is producing a bow. The children are free to decide what they want to produce, this is not directed by the adult and they then choose the suitable branch and other resources they need.

In the last part of the footage we see the teacher helping a one-armed boy. This boy can manage the carving really well and has good strength to peel back the bark. The educator is careful to ensure a safer technique for him, showing him how to hold the branch securely under his arm to allow him to work with the knife and not to hurt himself.

 **See footage** Working with Tools – Knives and Saws at <https://youtu.be/k6FzaW37yUU>

WHY THIS EXPERIENCE?

The children learn how to work with the real tools. They learn how to use the tools safely and treat them with respect. The children also obtain the trust and responsibility. It is very important for them.

"I HAVE MADE MY OWN BOW!"

You can see one of our children's most favourite activities in this movie. Working with tools is part of our daily programme. Actually, we don't plan this activity every day, but there is always at least one child who comes to borrow and practice with a saw or clippers or who wants to carve. The children learn how to choose a suitable wood, to figure out the procedure and to choose suitable tools.

The presence of the teacher is necessary when working with sharp tools. The children are acknowledged and they never start to work without letting the teacher know. The teacher attends and stays available. When children ask for help, the teachers help to find the suitable way to work it out together. The educators never give direct orders, they just offer how to make the work easier and more effective.

The children go through the whole process of how to make real things. They choose the suitable piece of wood which needs to be found first in the forest. They choose the suitable tools. They need to think about the kind of product they want

and they need to think about how to make it. They often have to wait for their demanded tools, as it might be in use by someone else. They also sometimes have to negotiate with others about the availability of the tools.

It is a great demonstration of confidence to trust the children with a saw, a knife, or clippers. We trust each other. We do our best to let the children know that we trust them. On the other hand, the children observe the rules for work with the sharp tools. They know there is always someone in the team who is able to support them and to help in case of need.

Confidence in children to build their skills in the world.

We of course agree on the rules first.



NOTE FROM THE PRACTITIONER



Lucie Palovská, Nature Pedagogue from Lesní klub Jurta says:

"What do we observe while working with a saw or a knife? The best way for children to learn these skills is copying. If one of the teachers starts to carve, within a few minutes there are children sitting next to them inspired and they are carving too. Carving is the kind of activity requiring a full concentration and peace. What can we see on the very active children who have a problem with concentration? They are able to concentrate, calm down and relax while carving. They can concentrate for a long time. Carving is a good way to relax and to practice the concentration."



PRODUCING ELDERFLOWER SYRUP

Lesní klub Jurta

QUALITIES DEMONSTRATED

Synergy with nature

The children learn how to observe the nature and their surroundings. They try to find out the information about nature. We use the gifts of nature to produce an elderflower syrup.

Skills and knowledge

The children learn how to produce the elderflower syrup. They search for the information in the book.

Respectful

We learn how to respect nature and not to take more than we need. We respect each other while working. The children are free to ask for the support they need.

 **See footage** Producing Elderflower Syrup at <https://youtu.be/h6d7uOpJaW8>



EXPLANATION OF BEST PRACTICE

In the first part of the footage we can see the teacher and the child searching for some information in a book. The child has found a leaf and it is wondering where it has come from.

We always take a few books about nature with us for our trips. We took one of the books and started to search some information about the leaf the little girl had discovered. We found out that this leaf is a dry fruit from a hornbeam. In the video we are reading together some information about a hornbeam and then we are looking for some hornbeam in our surroundings. Next we make a conclusion that this fruit-seed was brought by the wind to this place. The girl is trying to find out if this fruit is going to fly. She is fascinated by the spinning movement of the hornbeam fruit. All other children tried to find the same seed (achene of a hornbeam) and they threw it in the air to

watch it falling down on the ground.

In the second part we can see the children and the teacher viewing and reading a book. The children came with the idea in the morning that we could take the book with us for our trip. The book is called "Small Carver". You can find a lot of inspiration for carving in this book. The children are viewing the book and they are talking about their past experiences with carving, reflecting together. They are also talking about what they wish to carve today.

The third clip shows the production of the elderflower syrup. We can see the whole process of production of the elderflower syrup starting with picking and then counting the elderflowers, preparing the infusion, maceration, straining and ending with the children (and adults) most favourite part – tasting.

WHY THIS EXPERIENCE?

Using the gifts of nature – the children learn that we can take the gifts of nature in a reasonable quantity and we can use it to produce edible and delicious things. Syrup, juice, tea and other delicacies are examples of we enjoy nature respectfully in the kindergarten. When we are here for the nature, the nature is here for us. We can learn about the nature while touching it, smelling it, tasting it and also while viewing the books about it.

CHILDREN TAKE BOOKS WITH THEM INTO THE NATURE SPACES AND LEARN TO SEARCH FOR INFORMATION. THEY LOOK UP LEAVES, HERBS, FRUITS, BIRDS AND INSECTS...

COMPARING PICTURES TO THE REAL OBJECTS BRINGS INSIGHT AND BUILDS RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING.

Children learn to work with information – searching, reading and getting to know the things surrounding them. The children learn very fast how to search in a book, when they want to find something out.

Thanks to this skill they connect the gained knowledge and information together. After

finding one piece of information they usually continue to view the book and ask for more information about other things too, linking to things they already know.

To produce an elderflower syrup it takes about three days. The children work in full concentration. They share their work and the older children who know how to continue are willing to show the others, learning from each other. They know how to manage

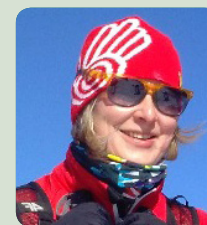
the task independently. However, it is very important to follow the instructions when producing the elderflower syrup. You need to know how many flowers to pick for one litre of water and follow the recipe carefully. The children count the flowers; they watch the amount of water. They mix the water with sugar, wash the flowers, cut the lemon

and assist to pour the syrup into the bottles. They participate in every aspect of the work which is hidden behind the few bottles of the syrup, from start to finish. Respect is very important, the children are aware not to break the branches, because the trees need them to have flowers and fruits again in the next year. When we treat the nature with respect, we are allowed to take its gifts from time to time.



Synergy stands for working together. Where else to learn about ourselves and nature than in and with nature?

NOTE FROM THE PRACTITIONER



Lucie Zimolová, Nature Pedagogue from Lesní klub Jurta says:

"Producing the seasonal delicatessen is a favourite activity. We make plantain syrup, young spruce branchlet syrup, elderflower syrup, dandelion syrup, apple juice and grape juice. We learn how to do it ourselves with the children together. This activity is great because it lasts for a couple of days and there are many things to do in many steps. Everybody may take a part and most of the children participate. We enjoy working together.

We enjoy the self-made syrup for a few weeks and we taste the benefit of our work. The children are happy they can produce a real, useable product and we also learn that food and drinks don't "grow in a supermarket". We watch how the elders bloom from spring and we remember the elderflower syrup production in winter and we look forward to produce it again next summer."

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