

COME OUT AND PLAY

WELCOME TO THE LAUNCH OF OUR NEW SECTION — A GUIDE TO OUTDOOR LIFE. AUTHOR CAROLINE WEBSTER OFFERS THINGS TO DO, PLACES TO GO, FOOD TO GROW AND ACTIVITIES KIDS WILL LOVE.

If you think deeply about a time that gave you immense enjoyment and filled you with absolute wonder, chances are it happened when you were outdoors.

Maybe it was watching as a spider busied herself in her web. Perhaps it was building a cubbyhouse using only what you could find in the back garden and then hiding from Mum nestled in your hidey hole. Or maybe the first time you tried riding a bike, fishing, climbing a tree or exploring the depths of a rock pool.

Encouraging your child's innate sense of curiosity about the world in which they live is an integral part of helping them learn about themselves and their environment. Children are natural explorers, so spending time outside, where they can discover in an unstructured way, builds resilience, confidence, independence, creativity and imagination. Simply put, spending time outdoors grows smarter, happier children.

Apart from the obvious benefits of exercise and honing motor skills, outdoor activity also imparts gentle messages about food sources, time, the cycle of life, and how everything in our world is connected. But best of all, it's just good, plain, old-fashioned inexpensive fun.

The outdoors is where imagination and discovery collide in the most spectacular fashion. Nature's secrets are just begging to be discovered and what's more, she is a patient teacher and your child a willing student. Step outside and let the magic begin.



MAKING BABY BIRDS

After wandering around your neighbourhood looking for baby birds, why not get your kids to make their own? Simply scrunch tin foil into a bird shape and cover with glue and tissue paper. Leave to dry, then cover with a layer of leaves. Add feather wings, leg twigs, peppercorn eyes and a leaf or bark beak, and your creations are ready to take flight!

CREATE AN INSTANT VEGIE PATCH GRAB AN OLD TOY (AN ABANDONED TOY TRUCK IS IDEAL) AND HELP THE KIDS POT UP SOME EDIBLE PLANTS. LETTUCE, PARSLEY, BASIL, ROCKET AND NASTURTIUMS GROW FAST (IMPORTANT FOR YOUTHFUL IMPATIENCE). THE PROCESS WILL FASCINATE AND KIDS ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO EAT SOMETHING THEY'VE GROWN THEMSELVES.