

treasured FINDS

CAROLINE WEBSTER ON HOW TO EXPAND A CHILD'S DELIGHT IN COLLECTING NATURAL OBJECTS.

ONE OF MY most treasured possessions is an exquisitely patterned cowrie shell, found when I was only eight during a summer beach holiday. It still sits on my bedside table and reminds me of the power of nature to enthrall adults and children alike.

Children love collecting. Left to their own devices, they will seek out the most extraordinary things during forays outdoors and enjoy sharing their finds. One of the easiest ways to build on this is to encourage a found collection and a nature scrapbook.

Needing nothing other than an unlined notebook and some coloured pencils, begin by encouraging your child to sit at a window and draw whatever they see. It might be a bird sitting on a branch, an enormous tree or some clouds racing by. To begin with, the sketches may be nothing more than a few squiggles and a splash of colour. Each time you head outdoors, suggest they take their journal and record what they see. They can collect little bits and pieces to stick in the journal — and take a camera to capture pictures of interesting things you are unable to pick up.

For finds too large to put into a journal, simply find a cardboard box (a shoe box is ideal), have your child decorate it and let the fun begin. Feathers, bones, shells, bits of glass worn smooth by the ocean, brightly coloured leaves, driftwood, gumnuts and pretty pebbles could all form part of the display. *

STRUNG WITH AFFECTION

Children really go for this activity. Gather shells, large feathers and fresh gumnuts. Help your child pierce holes in the objects using a cake skewer or a small Phillips head screwdriver and thread them on brightly coloured string, ribbon or wool, interspersing with old buttons. Made with love, they are great gifts for family and friends.

TREASURES MAY LIE IN THE SIMPLEST PLACES, LIKE NATURE STRIPS AND VERGES, BUT NEVER TAKE ITEMS FROM NATIONAL PARKS, BOTANIC GARDENS OR PRIVATE GARDENS.