



Enjoy

Nature Near You

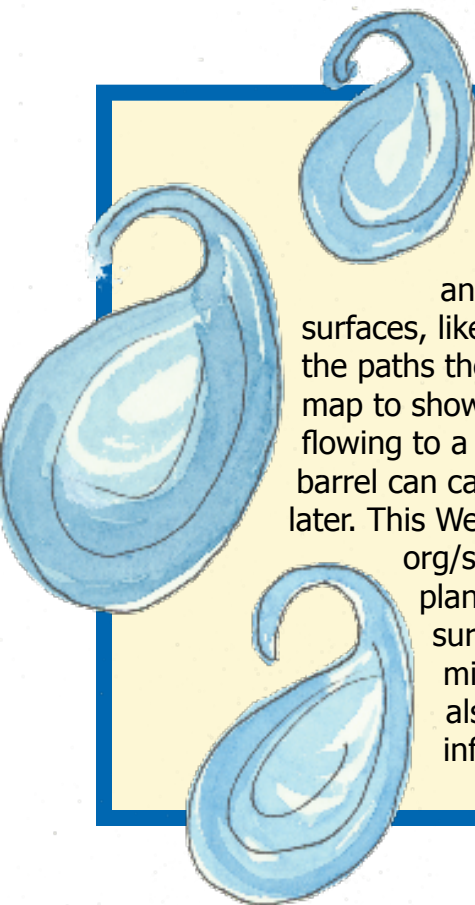
In Spring

Getting your family in touch with **NATURE** is as simple as walking outside. Have fun and learn together outdoors with these simple activities you can do in your backyard... and beyond!



PAINT BY NATURE

Have you ever noticed the soil in your yard? Dig a little soil from different parts of the yard or other places you visit. Put each sample into a small container. Are there different colors? Different textures? Add water to make the soil into paint. People in many parts of the world have used mud paints to decorate cloth. Use an old paintbrush (or make your own from pine needles or grass), and paint a picture onto an old piece of cloth or heavy paper. Let your design dry in the sun, then brush off any loose clumps of soil.



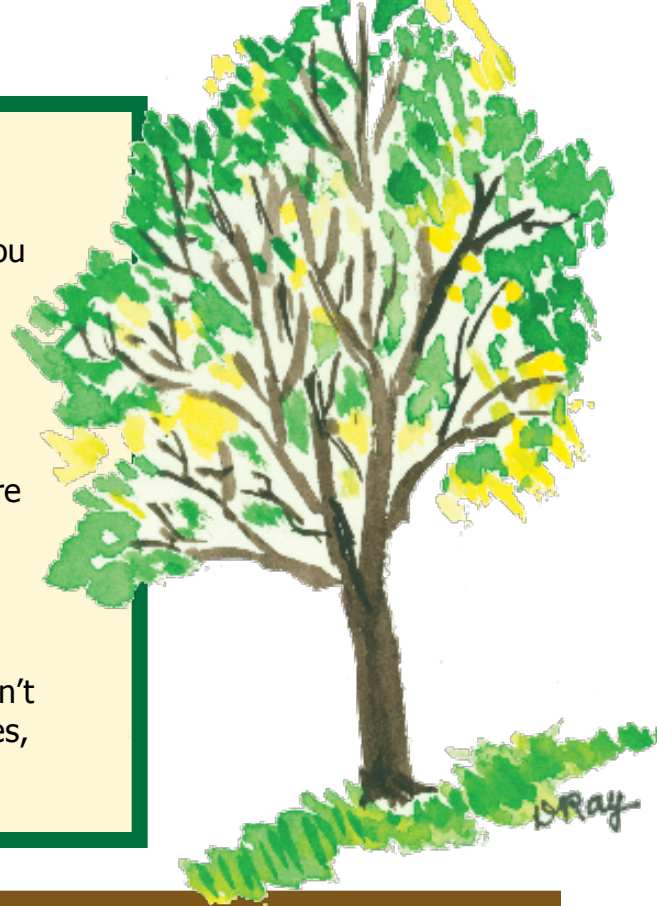
WHERE DOES WATER GO?

When it rains, what happens to the water from your roof, driveway and yard? Draw a map of your yard showing the house and all the hard surfaces, like driveways and sidewalks. After a hard rain, go outside and observe the paths the water takes as it leaves those hard surfaces. Draw arrows on your map to show where the water goes. Is the water taking any soil with it? Is it flowing to a storm drain? There might be better ways to use that water. A rain barrel can catch the water from your roof, and you can save it to water plants later. This Web site will show you how to make a rain barrel: http://www.cbf.org/site/DocServer/rain_barrel_guide-web.pdf?docID=2868. You can also plant a rain garden to slow down the water coming off roofs and paved surfaces. Rain gardens keep our streams clean by filtering pollution that might reach streams through the storm drains. These gardens can also be beautiful and provide habitat for wildlife. For lots of rain garden information, visit <http://www.dof.virginia.gov/rfb/rain-gardens.shtml>.

FAMILY TREE

Choose one tree in your yard to be your "family" tree. If you don't have any trees, choose a tree at a park, school, library or other place you visit often. Make a family tree scrapbook to record the things you do and learn as you get to know your tree this year.

- ✿ Draw or take a picture of your tree in spring. Are there any flowers? If your tree lost its leaves for the winter, notice the buds along the bare stems in early spring. What happens to the buds over time?
- ✿ Are any birds or animals using your tree? If you haven't seen any, look for clues they left behind, such as holes, nests, nut shells or droppings.



BIRD NEST BUILDING

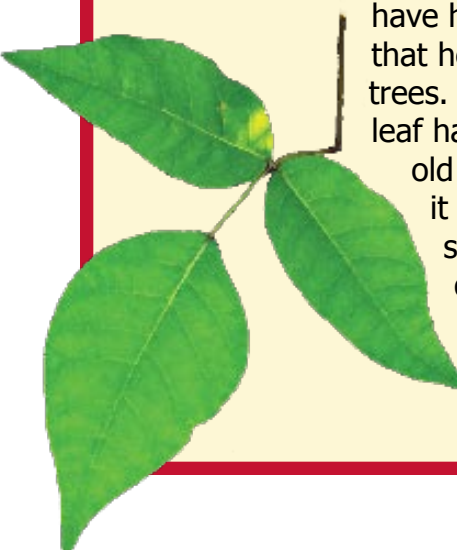
Bird nests are used for raising young. Birds make nests out of many materials: grass, twigs, leaves, mud, animal hair and sometimes bits of trash! Many nests last a long time. Some birds use the same nest each year, repairing and adding to it. Others make a new nest each time they need to lay eggs. Try making a bird nest out of things you find outside. If you think it's hard to make a nest with your fingers, imagine building like a bird, with just a beak and feet! Place your nest in a tree or bush, and check every few days to see how long your nest stands up to the weather.

STAYING SAFE

Learn to recognize and avoid poison ivy when you are outdoors. Brushing against any part of the plant can give you a very itchy rash. Poison ivy grows as a vine or low shrub. Large vines

have hairlike rootlets that help them cling to trees. Each poison ivy leaf has 3 leaflets. The

old rhyme, "leaves of three, leave it be," can help you remember to stay away from poison ivy. If you do touch it, wash your skin with soap and water as soon as you can, and wash any clothes that may have touched the plant.



Illustrations by Doris Ray



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