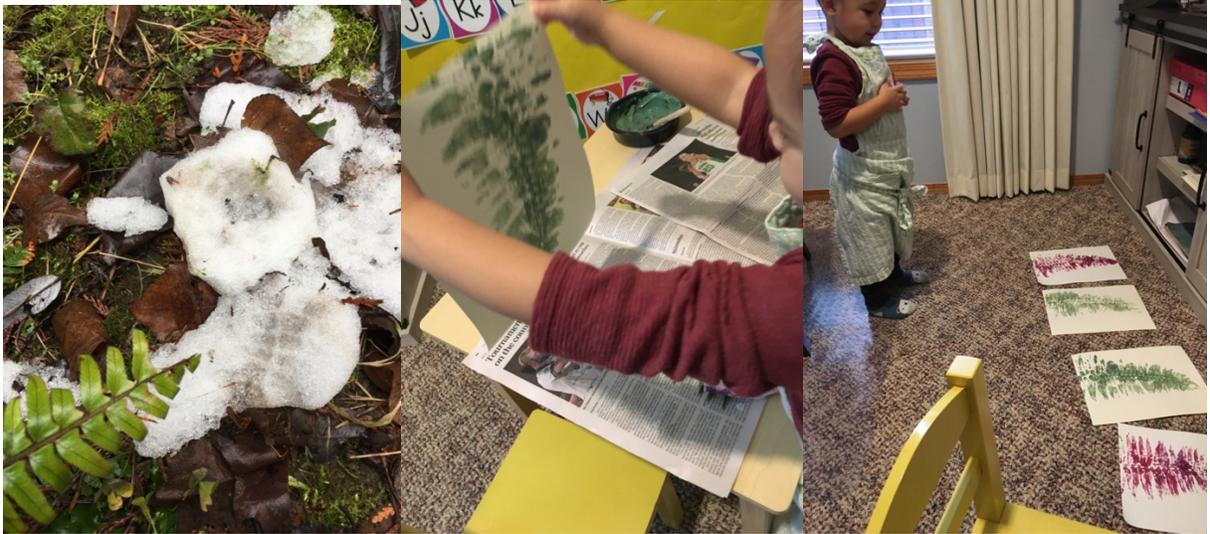


Autumn: Gathering and Calming

Leaf it to Leaves!

Introduction: You can do this activity any time of the year, but in the Autumn, leaves really take center stage. It was actually after the first snow fall when we were walking along a trail near our house when we noticed the leaf prints that made themselves!! It inspired us to cut one of the many ferns to take home and make prints of our own. Ribbed leaves, like ferns, make great prints!



Materials needed: One or two leaves. They need to be supple, not fragile, so recently fallen leaves or carefully clipped ones work best. Earth friendly paints mixed in a jar, a large brush, some newspapers, and white and/or colored construction papers. You can use one color or more. Keep it simple, at first, anyway!

Steps:

- 1) Spread the newspaper on a table. Wear an apron or something to protect clothing.
- 2) Place the leaf on the table and paint it with the brush.
- 3) Move the leaf carefully to a new, blank page of the newspaper.
- 4) Take a piece of paper and place on top of the painted leaf and rub gently.
- 5) Carefully lift up and *voila!* You have a leaf print!
- 6) You can try making another print right then. It may be more faded looking, but that can be cool, too.
- 7) Repeat the steps above as many times as you wish to make as many prints as you wish!
- 8) Let dry.
- 9) Clean-up is important, so involve your child in that, too!

Materials needed: Wax paper, collected assortment of leaves, iron, ironing board, cotton cloth

Steps to Pressed Wax Leaves Creation:

- 1) Collect a variety of leaves: colors, shapes, sizes
- 2) These don't need to be pressed ahead of time if you do this activity right after collecting
- 3) Place a piece of wax paper (any shape) on the table.
- 4) Assemble the leaves in any design on the wax paper.
- 5) Place another piece of wax paper on top of the leaves (sandwich the leaves).
- 6) Adults only! Carefully lift the wax paper sandwich to an ironing board.
- 7) Place the wax sheets with the leaves on the board, cover with a cotton towel.
- 8) Have iron ready, low heat (not too hot) and iron over and over until you see the wax pieces have melted together but be careful not to overdo!
- 9) Let cool.
- 10) Make into cards, placemats, or hang in a window for a really cool "stain glass" affect.

Connections through the senses: Leaves

- 1) Can you be a leaf? Move and dance like a leaf blowing in the wind or falling from a tree.
- 2) Draw big leaf! Start at the top of the page and create a contour line only drawing...find all the lines in the leaf and draw them on your big leaf!
- 3) Listening: What noises do the leaves make when you walk on them after they've fallen from the trees? Sit under a tree and listen to the leaves still on the tree. What sounds do they make?
- 4) Textures: what do the leaves feel like? Touch one leaf: is it rough or smooth?
- 5) Do leaves have a smell? Do they smell different after they've been on the ground a while?

Mud Pies Anyone?

Introduction:

Autumn provides opportunities to play in the mud, as summer does, too; but, this time, the mud might be from rain, so there could be lots of puddles available. Jaxon loved putting dirt in an empty clay pot by the herb garden and adding water to stir “soup”, so one day we decided to take it a step further and make mud pies! You thicken up the soup and then, using small shovels, dish it onto a wooden plank or on a space on the sidewalk or on bricks. Add rocks for decoration, and voila! After a bit of baking in the sun, you have Mud Pies á la fun!!



Materials needed for all above activities: Outdoor planter or pail to mix mud in, small shovel, water, rocks, sticks, paintbrush, cardboard, large paper, wooden plank

Steps for all above:

- 1) Mix mud (use dirt you know hasn't been used as a litter box for cats. You can always buy potting soil if you aren't sure), water to make a “soup”. Have fun adding all kinds of ingredients such as rocks, leaves, sticks, etc. Then, thicken with more mud for pies.
- 2) Scoop out pies with a small shovel and plop onto a wooden board or plank to dry. Have a fun “mud pie” dinner, use imagination and invite friends or family!

- 3) Use some of the mix in the pot to draw or pain with! Using the cardboard/large paper (on a smooth background board if possible or heavy-duty cardboard piece) as a surface, take a stick/brush and draw/paint on the board. This can be done in separate activites over time to experiment.

Connections through the senses: Mud Pies

- 1) Can you make up a song about making a mud pie?
- 2) What noises did you hear while making your pies?
- 3) How does the mud feel between your fingers?
- 4) Do your mud pies have a smell?

Bird's Nest and Owl Pellets

Introduction:

My sister gave Jaxon a bird's nest she found on her ranch. We decided it would be cool to make one out of mud, sticks, leaves, and rocks. She also found owl pellets and gave those to us, too.



Materials needed for Bird Nest: Mud, sticks, sturdy board, rocks (not pictured) for eggs.

Steps:

- 1) If possible, examine a real bird's nest.
- 2) Mix some dirt and water to make a thick mud paste.
- 3) Scoop out with hands or small shovel onto the board and form into a nest.
- 4) Build with sticks, leaves, etc.
- 5) Add rocks as eggs.

Owl Pellets - Explanation:

In addition to the nest my sister found, she also gave us some owl pellets. We really enjoyed dissecting them, but please search for proper cleaning procedure. Owl pellets are actually quite sanitary, the owl regurgitates them as bones wrapped in fur from their stomach, which has naturally sanitized them. However, you should be sure they've been sanitized following directions.

We ordered an owl pellet from <https://www.oregonowlpellets.com/> to dissect. We discovered cool mouse and mole skulls and bones in the one pellet! We categorized the bones and put them in our "Nature Museum" and examined them using a magnifying lens. Really educational and fun!! You can connect this activity to learning about owls and the food chain.

Connections through the senses: Bird's Nest and Owl Pellets

- 1) Have you ever watched birds collecting twigs and other items to build a nest in the spring? What kinds of materials did the birds use to make this nest? If you have a nest to examine or find one in a tree you can see (somewhat).
- 2) Draw a contour line drawing of your nest. Start at the top and draw big! What will you put in your nest?
- 3) Textures: what does your bird's nest feel like?
- 4) Are there any smells?
- 5) Can you save the small bones you found in the owl pellets? Put them in a special box or place to display.
- 6) Draw a picture of one of the bones, or any of them that interest you!
- 7) Can you learn more about owls? Check out books or purchase one to read. "Owl Moon" by Jane Yolen is a great book to read!
- 8) What sounds do owls make? Do different owls make different hoots? Barn Owls and Great Horned Owls do have very different calls.
- 9) Can you be an owl? How would your wings move?

For the Love of Bats!

Introduction:

And in the fall what's not to like about bats? Since they are featured on Halloween, and since we saw bats at night flying in our back yard (and the Oregon Brown Bat pictured above our neighbor's door one morning) we learned all about bats.

Jaxon painted this large picture of a bat using brown paint on a large piece of paper on an easel. Awesome!



Materials Needed for I Am a Bat (third photo): black and brown papers, white paint, white crayon or color pencil, scissors, glue

Steps:

- 1) On a brown piece of paper (can use cut out paper bag), make two hand prints of your child (each hand) and set aside to dry.
- 2) Read about bats and learn their wings are really their hands.
- 3) On brown paper, make a face: eyes, nose, mouth of a bat. Cut it out.
- 4) Glue the face on the black paper.
- 5) Add the two hands on each side.
- 6) Add legs and a tail at the bottom.
- 7) Write "Bat" at the top.
- 8) Jaxon was barely three when we did this project, children 3+ on can make an entire bat body to glue on the black paper, but still do the hand prints.

Connections through the senses: Bats

- 1) Be a bat! Can you fly like a bat? How do they fly differently than birds?
- 2) Create a painting, collage, or drawing of a bat!
- 3) Listening: do bats make sounds? What are they?
- 4) You must never touch a bat, but if you could, what might it feel like?
- 5) Do bats smell? Have you ever seen guano, bat poop? Does it smell?
- 6) Learn how you can make a bat house for your yard or neighborhood.

Halloween is a Hoot!

Halloween offers so many fun activities!! Jax's father, Jacques, along with Grandpa, helped create a cool pumpkin!

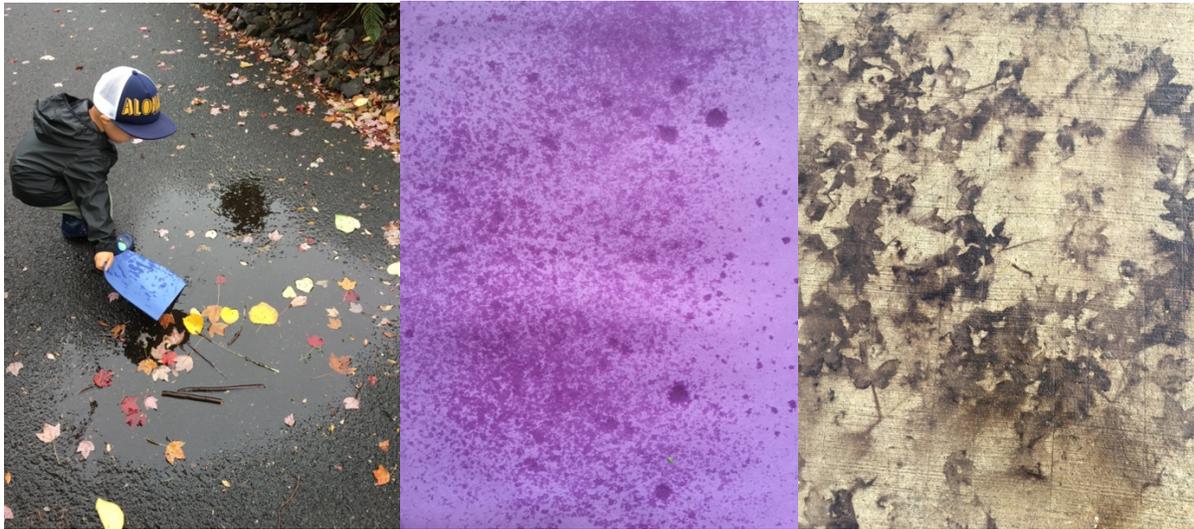


Small ghosts were made from tissues (can use white cloth), rubber bands, and anything (I think we used scraps of cloth) to stuff the head. Use marker, paint, or crayon for eyes. We were learning shapes and colors, so I made this Halloween themed matching game.

Connections through the senses: Halloween

- 1) Move like a ghost and make scary sounds!
- 2) Draw shapes of Halloween objects/subjects (above example) and color them or make a collage.
- 3) Textures: What does your pumpkin feel like?
- 4) Can you listen as darkness approaches? What sounds do you hear at night as opposed to the day?
- 5) What did the pumpkin smell like when you opened it to scoop out the seeds?
- 6) Bake the pumpkin seeds and enjoy eating them! Make a pie or bread out of a pumpkin you aren't carving. When the carved pumpkin is decaying, after you've used it, return the pumpkin shell to the earth via compost. Scatter the seeds in a garden bed for pumpkins to grow next year!

Rain prints on colored paper and on sidewalks



Introduction:

Find a puddle to splash in and see your reflections! So much fun to visit the “Upsidedown” world of puddles! Children love to see their reflections! Notice how the leaves float and how some sink.

Materials needed: Colored construction paper and...rain!!

Steps:

- 1) When it’s raining (not too heavy), bring a colored construction paper with and let the rain dance to make patterns of raindrops!
- 2) Watch the drops disappear once you bring it indoors. What happens to the water?
- 3) If it’s not raining, use a spray bottle of water to do outside or inside for same effect.
- 4) Notice all the gorgeous leaf prints on the sidewalks. Investigate, how does it happen? What makes the leaf shape stay long after the leaf is gone?

Connections:

- 1) Make sounds of raindrops inside by tapping with spoons or sticks outside. Create a “rain stick” out of a hollow tube (close up both ends after putting some rice inside) and decorate it. See Winter Activities for photo.
- 2) Looks at your hands. Looks at a leaf. Do you see any similarities? The veins in a leaf look a lot like the veins in our hands! Trace your hand and make it into a leaf by coloring it in and putting a stem on it.
- 3) Stand and feel the rain on your face and hands. What does that feel like?
- 4) How does the air smell after a rain shower?
- 5) Create a poster of the water cycle. Start with the ocean, show arrows pointing up to a cloud, then rain from the cloud. Draw a puddle that evaporates and show a river with rain going back to the sea. If possible, create this on a large piece of cardboard or paper so your child can follow the trail with his/her whole body. Sing a rain song!!

Playdough Recipe and Leaf Relief Prints



Here's an easy home-made playdough recipe. Great to do on a rainy day!!

2 cups of white flour
¾ cups of salt
4 tsp cream of tartar
2 cups lukewarm water
2 tbsp coconut oil

Instruction and Steps:

Cook over medium heat on stove, stir constantly.

When it gets solid and pliable, remove to wax paper on table and as it cools, knead it.

Divide into three balls and store in airtight bag. You can add food coloring, but I don't recommend it. You can create something and let it dry, but this recipe is for pliable dough to use and reuse often!! It lasts a few weeks to a month or so before mold can set in. It is all biodegradable, so discard with compost if possible. Have fun!!

Sturdy pine leaves work best to create leaf prints in the playdough. If the leaf is too fragile or brittle, it won't work well. You can make all kinds of prints like the one pictured above! Look for sturdy items like twigs and rocks with interesting shapes, too.