

## Winter Art and Nature Activities

### *Winter: Gestating and Dreaming*

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Winter is such a splendid time to slow down and rest. Scale back the pace and spend time just noticing what Nature is up to...withdrawing, hibernating, dreaming, gestating...it's there beneath the surface where we must be still and have patience to understand its wondrous mysteries.

Even if you live in the south where the changes are more subtle, they are there. What's different about winter and summer? Be curious and engage the skill of deep listening and meditation. Children are actually very good at this once you give them the space to explore the nuances of the season.

Read stories about animals that hibernate or go dormant during the winter. Notice the days growing shorter...there's more darkness and new stars emerging in the night sky. Using the natural earth paints, create starry night scenes after Van Gogh's famous painting.

In winter, it's fun to notice the trees that have shed their leaves and how their branches become lively line dances in the sky. In the daytime, it's amazing to notice the various dances of the tree shadows. Find a piece of large paper and trace a section you see on the sidewalk using black charcoal chalk or colored chalks. Then, you can have fun with them and fill them in with colors, depict textures, or write inside the lines!



Nature creates fabulous sculptures, too! Notice how the tree branches bend, how the grasses fold into hollows, and how the pine needles, for example, arrange themselves on the ground (see third photo next page).

Watch Andy Goldsworthy's "Rivers and Tides" to get inspired to create your own nature sculptures...that don't last long most times, but are really fun to create and observe them day to day as they gradually fall apart.



Make mud pies and mud soup and host a pretend tea party with the trees!

While you're at it, paint on the sidewalk with the mud using sticks and fallen branches that still have leaves like the pine branches, or find a large board and put a large piece of paper on it to make a mud painting!! This activity was mentioned in my *Autumn Activities* as well.

Collect small sticks to put in a jar or vase to create a fun "stick arrangement". You can add colored cotton or colored cotton string or other things you wish to make a delightful centerpiece. We created the piece on the left below by gluing magazine pictures on a jar and gluing cotton on the twigs to look like Snowberries! Find larger branches (never cut from trees, use only what's already on the ground, thanks) to make a little shelter of your own!



For Valentine's Day, make valentines for the trees! Cut out heart shapes from cardboard and using homemade glue (white flour and warm water, mix to make a paste and store in refrigerator for 2 weeks...it works fabulously!!) glue colored paper onto the cardboard, add twigs, colorful cotton strings, and write something you are thankful for on the back. We have much to be grateful for to the trees, such as: air, food, shelter, furniture, heat, homes, beauty.... The birds will use the strings to make nests and your neighbors will see the hearts on the trees and feel gratitude, too!! We used horse hair from my sister's horses for the bird's nests too!



Since Winter can be cold and blustery, it's fun to create things inside. Indoors you can make blueberry straw (compostable, bamboo, paper, or metal please) paintings, homemade playdough and texture prints (mentioned in *Autumn Activities*), and homemade clay shapes!



Blueberry paint: use frozen blueberries. Thaw and press into desired consistency.

For Homemade playdough: 2 cups white flour,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup salt, 4 tsp cream of tartar, 2 cups lukewarm water, 2 tbsp coconut oil. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly. Cool and knead on wax paper. Divide into balls and store in refrigerator.

Clay: 1 cup salt, 2 cups flour, 1 cup water. Mix and roll out to  $\frac{1}{4}$ ", stamp shapes, poke hole for string later, bake for 3 hours at 120 degrees.



Pop Pop with Jaxon on Groundhog's Day. Jaxon painted his face with nontoxic Natural Earth face paint to turn him into a groundhog! We learned about Groundhogs and made a paper bag puppet and had a little play.

**As with my other seasonal activities, always incorporate using all the senses possible when doing activities with children to engage and deep the learning.** Sing while you paint, move like the trees, smell the colors....create a whole body experience whenever possible!!

These are just a few fun things you can do in the winter. Write about what your dreams are, what you would like to do and about what it feels like to rest and just breathe. Make collages with winter images and words to match.

**The fun is endless!!**