



OCTOBER 2025

WILDROOTS NATURE PLAY PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

"Nature's music
never falls apart,
'Cause that rhythm is in the beat
in the beat of every heart."

-From the song "Nature's Music"
by the Okee Dokee Brothers



What a gorgeous time of year to be together at WildRoots! The red maples (*acer rubrum*, Rhode Island's state tree) are putting on their fantastic display – and it never disappoints! As the wind blows the colorful leaves down around us, it's impossible not to be present in the magic of the moment. As we shift our rhythms with the seasons, our weekly sessions have involved changing play patterns and lots of communal basking in the sun. Cooler days are ahead, and our bodies know it!

October 13th was Indigenous Peoples' Day and November will be Native American Heritage month. This is an opportune time to examine how well we are honoring the Indigenous communities who are the ancestral stewards of the land where we live, work, and play. We'd like to acknowledge the people of the Pequot, Mohegan, and Eastern Nehantick tribal nations, and express our respect for their traditions and values. It is one of our guiding principles that our work in connecting children with nature honors how the First People emphasize living in reciprocity and balance with the natural world.

As we enter Fall Term II of nature play beginning November 6th, we are also looking ahead to the end of the the year and the winter months. We are excited to be planning a monthly series of programs with the Westerly Land Trust. Details will be shared soon! We are also figuring out our plan for our winter programming, as we work to balance the urge to slow down and hibernate during the colder months with the need to gather in community and get outside in all weather. Information about winter will be shared by mid-November. Finally, on Saturday, December 13th we will be hosting our second annual Lantern Walk. Current and former families are invited to join us for a special session where we carry our lanterns through the woods and share our light with one another.



Nature Highlights

You may have noticed huge flocks of noisy blackbirds congregating in the trees and corn fields lately! These are the aggregate flocks of *European starlings*, *red-winged blackbirds*, *rusty blackbirds*, and *common grackles* that over-winter here in New England and roost together in large flocks. Watching them move around with such synchrony is an incredible sight!



As breeding (rut) season approaches, male *white-tailed deer* are rubbing off the velvet covering from their hardening antlers on small trees. You can see signs of this when you notice some of the bark torn from young trees, in a vertical pattern. As they rub, they also leave behind their scent, communicating a number of things to other deer within the area.



Animals who enter true hibernation this time of year include the *woodchuck* and *woodland and meadow jumping mouse*. Instead of caching food like other animals are doing, these animals must put on enough fat by the end of summer and early fall to sustain them through the colder months.



Many spider species lay their eggs in fall and then die. Inside of the egg sacs, the eggs hatch and the tiny baby spiders overwinter together before emerging in spring.



Deciduous trees stop photosynthesis and the chlorophyll that usually makes the leaves green disappears, revealing other pigments that have been there all along – reds, yellows, oranges, and even purples in some cases. This all happens because the trees must conserve water over the winter, which they would lose too much of through evaporation if they kept their leaves (since they are not waxy like conifer needles). Even poison ivy (see photos) puts on a beautiful show this time of year, so be careful which leaves you are collecting!