

JULY 2025

WILDROOTS NATURE PLAY PROGRAM NEWSLETTER



"And do you know, what I give to you?
And do you know,
what will last you through and through?
A heart of wonder.
A heart of wonder.
A heart of wonder I give to you."

-From "Fairy House," a song by Sarah Pirtle



July is like the heart of the summer. The days are hot, the gardens are abundant, and cooler days still feel far away. We are settling into our rhythms here at WildRoots, having welcomed so many new families over the last month! We are grateful that there are so many families who want to join our nature play community in order to prioritize connection and child-led play!

With growth comes a need for change and adaptation. We are going to be trying a new method for checking in at play sessions. Please visit the big table and check your family in when you arrive at each play session. Payments can be submitted in the black drop-box or online using the website. It's our hope that this new process will allow us to circulate and be more available for the face-to-face greetings we want to extend to each of our children and caregivers as they arrive.

We also want to remind everyone of our policies around pond play. We ask that **children only wade up to their knees** when fishing in the pond. Please make sure that you are always with your child when they are near the pond, remaining within arm's reach of them. If you have multiple children, we know this can be challenging at times. However, the pond presents the highest level of risk at our site. Our top priority is the safety and well-being of each and every one of your wonderful children, and we rely on our community of caregivers to help with this. Thank you for your cooperation and commitment to collective responsibility!

Nature Highlights

Common milkweed is blooming now and attracting a variety of visitors with its sweet scent and intricate flowers, including milkweed beetles, crab spiders, orb weaver spiders, slugs, and monarch caterpillars and butterflies. Milkweed is the only host plant for monarchs.



Eastern ratsnakes, which can grow to be 5 or 6 feet in length and can surprisingly climb trees, are laying their eggs this time of year. They will lay between 5 and 44 eggs in loose soil, piles of sawdust or manure, or soft rotting wood.



Red fox kits are growing up and becoming more independent right now, embarking on hunts on their own. Their appearance is shifting to include more adult-like features, although they are still smaller than full adults.



Cicadas are emerging in the adult stage, digging out of the ground where they went after hatching, and crawling up a tree, fence post, or other vertical surface. Some nymphs stay underground for as many as 13-17 years! Once they locate a good spot, they slowly molt and emerge as winged adults. The males can be heard loudly calling using their drum-like tymbals. This buzzing sound is a hallmark of hot summer days.



Songbirds are quieter now, after the height of the courtship and mating season has passed. Many birds are caring for young still, both in the nest and after the babies have fledged. Some birds have 2-4 broods each season, including the *American robin*, *Eastern bluebird*, and *Northern cardinal*.



Chanterelles, an edible fungi, are beginning to fruit on the forest floor this month. They are trumpeted in shape with false gills extending downward, orange in color, and have a distinct apricot scent.

