

JUNE 2025

WILDROOTS NATURE PLAY PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

"You are my flower, my wildflower,
You make me happy through rain and snow.
From sun and water come sons and daughters
And you show us how good it is to grow."

-From the song "Language of the Flowers" by the Okee Dokee Brothers

The solstice is approaching and we are celebrating the glorious days of light and warmth with summer finally upon us. We will greet the strawberry full moon this week, as well as celebrate International Day of Play. As an organization, WildRoots advocates for children's right to play by making the space and time for prioritizing child-led nature play.

June's full moon is the Strawberry Moon, named this by indigenous peoples because it comes when the wild strawberries are ready to harvest. On June 7, my family had the opportunity to attend the celebration of Strawberry Thanksgiving with the Narragansett tribal community, hosted by the Tomaquag Museum and held at what is now known as Ninigret Park. During the opening ceremony, the speakers shared that strawberries are significant because they symbolize connection and community, friendship and unity. They also spoke of the sacred connection to the natural world and their traditional values of living in reciprocity with creation. In other indigenous traditions, the strawberry stands for the growth needed to build and sustain community and relationships.

I have been reflecting on the role of nature play programs like ours, as these relate to the traditional beliefs and practices of the indigenous people who are the original stewards of this land. We have lost touch with these ancient and wise practices, and our planet and our humanity are in trouble because of this. As we nurture the next generation, I believe that we should be centering a relearning of this knowledge and wisdom from our indigenous neighbors. All of life on Earth is connected.



Nature Highlights

Male *eastern white pine* pollen cones have fallen down all over our play space and in the forests! These tiny golden or rust-colored cones were shed after they spread their pollen.



Eastern newts appear in two different forms after their larval phase. The newt starts its life in water, then undergoes metamorphosis and enters the red eft juvenile land stage. These bright orange newts can be found on moist days in woodlands. They are toxic to predators, as signaled by their bright coloring. Two to three years later, the newt returns to the water in its adult form - with a green body again!



Moths and butterflies are all around this time of year. The *luna moth*, with large green wings, uses its tail-like wing tips to confuse bats. They spin the tips in circles and create a sonar shield, which prevents the bats from echolocating them.



Fireflies are beetles of the family *Lampyridae*, of which there are 2,000 members! This month, the males are visible at night, demonstrating their unique species-specific light patterns as part of courtship behaviors.



Red-winged blackbird babies are fledging their nests right now. They take 10-11 days to mature enough to leave the nest. Their parents still feed the fledglings for several more weeks.



Green frogs are active in the pond. We can see and hear them! The male frog has round eardrums (tympana) that are larger than their eyes, and a bright green throat. Female eardrums are the same size or smaller than the eyes, and their throats are light in color.