

Creating a Natural Play Area

1. We aim to create **PROTECTED SPACES** for children. Protected Spaces are spaces children can play without interruption of others.

- Living Willow Tunnel or Willow Hut
- Wooden Post Hut
- Hammocks
- Sand Villages (sand, water, dramatic play, loose parts)
- Corners of play
- Play Houses
- Mud Kitchens (are great for corners)
- Transient Spaces (teepees, tents, electrical conduit structures)
- Weeping Trees for Hiding Spaces (Weeping White Mulberry)



2. We aim to create environments that **EMPOWER** children.

Loose Parts are materials that can be moved, carried, combined, redesigned, lined up, and taken apart and put back together in multiple ways.

Natural Loose Parts

- Acorns, pinecones, sticks, leaves
- Tree stumps
- Logs and tree cookies
- Bamboo poles
- Cut grasses, weeds, branches
- Driftwood
- Flat stones
- Sand, Mud, Water
- Stones, pebbles, rocks
- Shells



Manufactured Loose Parts

- Boards and lumber
- Cans, buckets, bins, crates
- Chairs, tables
- Dress-up clothes and props (scarves, hats, boots, capes)
- Fabric (Sheets, blankets, towels, rugs)

- Pots, pans, kitchen utensils
- Spools
- Steering wheels and tires
- Toy Animals
- Toy vehicles
- Wagons, bikes

3. We celebrate the CONNECTION of children with nature spaces and natural materials

Inspiring Imagination

- Protected Spaces / Magical Hideaways
- Performance Stages
- Miniature Worlds
- Child-Size Elements
- Messy Materials (Sand, mud, water)

Awakening the Senses

- Sensory Garden
- Fruit or Vegetable Garden
- Flowering perennial plants
- Musical Instruments
- Shrubs

Challenging Bodies

- Logs and wobbly rocks for balancing
- Boulders
- Hills / Slopes for rolling and sliding down
- Trees for climbing
- Trails and Open Spaces for Running
- Vines, ropes, and branches for hanging and swinging



Other Components

- Entryway features
- Gathering Area
- Large Gross Motor Area
- Art Area

Resources:

Robin Christie, Childspace, <https://www.childspace.co.nz/>

Nature Play at Home by Nancy Striniste

For resources on Colorado Nature Grants and Sensory Garden Colorado Plants, please visit:

<https://www.rootsandwingsfc.com/nature>

Natural Playscapes: Creating Outdoor Play Environments for the Soul by Rusty Keeler
Learning with Nature: Embedding Outdoor Practice by Claire Warden