



## March

### The Outdoor Classroom

‘M’ for ‘March’ and for ‘Marvelous Magnificent Mud Kitchen.’ Playing with mud stimulates imagination and creativity in children as it fosters open-ended play, communication, collaboration, and physical activity. Mud play enables children to connect and interact with the natural world around them. As the children touch the dirt when dry or wet, they are developing sensory skills which are absolutely necessary for brain development in building nerve connections which are essential for all kinds of learning.

For the older age groups, we introduced herbs and spices. We explained that spices and herbs are parts of various plants cultivated to impart aroma and flavor to foods. They stimulate appetite, add zest to food, and enhance flavors when used in small quantities. We demonstrated how one can pinch them with a thumb and index finger (pincer grasp). The children enjoy the smells, the textures, and the coloring. They’ve discovered that if it’s added to water in a bowl/bottle, it will create a color. We observed a PreK Class as they problem solved when the herbs and spices tray was depleted. They reached up to the low hanging branches of a tree to gather leaves and Spanish Moss. Our sense of smell is one of the most powerful senses we possess and a baby in the womb is getting a sense of his/her mother’s smell inside, which is part of the reason a baby recognizes his/her mother when he/she is born and it takes longer to recognize the dad by his smell. There is a direct scientifically proven link in our brains between memory and smell. When we smell something, it brings back a memory much quicker than any of our other senses can.

Our PreK & Kindergarten Classes discovered a wonderful addition to our very special play space. It is a water trough which enables them to experience water play in different ways. They are able to pump the water, to observe as the trough fills up when using the stopper, to observe as the trough drains when removing the stopper, and to recycle the pre-pumped water by lifting the heavy bucket and pouring its contents back into the trough. Given the time, the space, and the opportunity for lots of exploration, the children will develop meaningful concepts in mathematics, science, social skills, and language.

All the children discovered other inviting materials to explore. In their explorations, they learn as they play, and it evokes a feeling of joy and accomplishment. These wonderful feelings play a vital role in establishing a lifetime love of learning.

















