

Virtual Outdoor Education for Children & Teens

By Mariel York

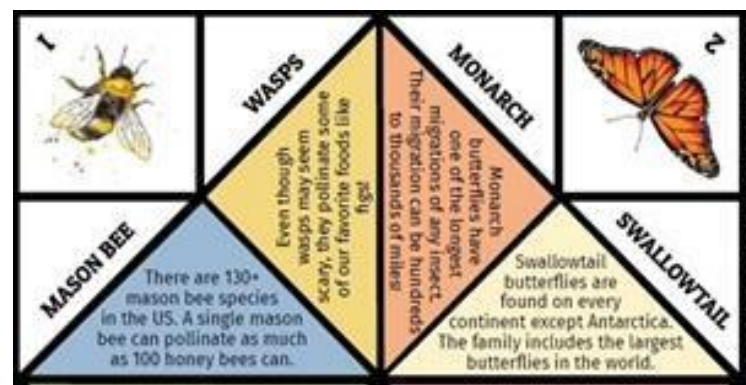


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Although we are loosening Covid restrictions and slowly returning to normal activities, parents and teachers may still be at a loss to connect children and teens with nature. Through gardening, weeding, planting, crafts, and DIY projects, families can design an outdoor space to relax, meditate, and contemplate nature.

There are basic ways that families can create a natural garden as well as provide a virtual classroom at home.

Backyards that offer food, water, cover, and nesting places for animals to raise young provide the four required elements of a [Certified Wildlife Habitat](#). By maintaining your backyard habitat in a sustainable, environmentally aware way, you will ensure the soil, air, and water that native wildlife need to stay healthy.



Virtual Classroom Resources and Videos

Parents do not need to “reinvent the wheel” to research or develop outdoor education programs. The National Wildlife Federation has created an [Eco-Schools USA](#) virtual program about nature that can be fun and challenging.



The *Eco-Schools USA* program supports [two major sets of national standards relating to science education](#): the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

As described at the NWF website:

In an effort to support teachers and parents during the COVID-19 crisis, NWF has put together a collection of activities and crafts to help you connect your students and children to nature, even from inside your home. National Wildlife Federation's *Eco-Schools USA* is the nation's largest comprehensive green school program. Combining environment-based learning with hands-on experiences, the *Eco-Schools USA* program sparks action that ripples out into the greater community.

In summary, despite the changes caused by the pandemic, there are still many fun ways to be outdoors in the fresh air that helps disperse viruses. Being outdoors gives one an emotional boost, distracts from one's problems, and helps one to cope with life's challenges.



Virtual Classroom Resources

- [Eco-Schools USA Website](#)
- [Eco-Schools USA YouTube Channel](#): Topics include: Go on a Virtual Hike from Home, Learn about Biodiversity, Virtually Observe Wildlife as a Scientist, Learn Outdoor Safety, and Connect Kids to Nature.

Eco-Schools USA Virtual Trips and Activities

Eco-Schools USA has a collection of short, at-home learning activities that teachers can share or families can complete together. Take a virtual field trip with *Nature's Witness™*, the National Wildlife Federation's first-ever exhibition of wildlife photography chosen from the *National Wildlife®* Photo Contest. See these virtual field trips and activities available to view or download:

All Ages:	Virtual Field Trip	Biodiversity Activity
Grades K-5:	Bird Activity Guide	What's the Matter in Nature Activity
Grades K-2:	Monarch Recovery Garden Model (K-2)	
Pre-K:	Symmetry in Nature (Pre-K)	
Grades 6-12:	Energy in My State Activity	Species in Decline

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