



# WORDS FROM THE WOOD

Week 5- 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Tips and ideas for learning and connecting outdoors during Covid-19...

## Magical Imagination...

In this issue:

- Bringing Nature in
- Magical Worlds
- Magic Potions & Wands
- Let's go Camping!

Imaginative play is a big part of what happens at Forest School. The natural resources available in a woodland space lend themselves to sticks that become swords and a mossy log that becomes a magical tiny kingdom. There are lots of resources in the form of sticks; stones; logs and cones that can be moved and made into something for an imaginative game. Or there may be a big log that can't be moved, but one week is a boat, the next a dragon. The possibilities are endless and can be replicated in the home or garden with 'loose parts' and open-ended structures. Imaginative play is so important, it allows children to explore and replay events that may be happening in their lives, a clever way of our bodies trying to make sense of these events and practicing things that others, especially adults do, for our future lives. It is also a way of exploring an entirely new world and becoming something special and amazing, something we all should do! So, this week there are some ideas about how we can provide for the imagination in the home or garden and some magical activities to try out, plus another video of me and some stick fairies!

## Bringing nature in

Imagination needs to run free and this works best when the resources that children play with are not pigeon-holed as one thing. For example, a toy boat will usually be limited to play as a boat. However, if you have lots of loose resources such as bricks, logs, stones, sand, shells or junk these can be made into a multitude of different vehicles, big or small. These are 'loose-parts', materials which can be moved; carried; combined; reconstructed and taken apart in many ways. They are also open-ended resources that do not limit the play to one area, although of course young children do like to repeat favourite play patterns for a long time! (important for development). On a larger scale open-ended play items, like the loose parts, offer many options, they can be a large log that becomes a horse or a castle. Or it can be a simple climbing frame that can also be a rocket or a ship depending on the interests of the child. Indoors, who hasn't travelled on a sofa to a far-off land! It's about seeing other possibilities and not limiting them, like the classic large cardboard box that you can climb right inside. If you cannot get outdoors then there is strong evidence that bringing the outdoors in, in the form of loose parts, to play with is really beneficial for our well-being and allowing that important nature connection. Get a tray; some jars and baskets and fill them with objects found on a walk or elsewhere: stones; cones; sticks; nuts; dried flowers or find other items in your home like beads; beans; marbles and corks. Then just locate it in an area that is easy to clear up and you could even add some soil or sand!



## Magical Worlds

As a child I would spend many a happy hour playing in the rockery with some tiny dolls and the rocks and plants, became their mini world. It really was a very absorbing activity that I have seen in other children, including my own. You can leave them to create their own small worlds in a suitable plant pot or border or you can add in some items to help prompt some imaginative play. One well known idea is a Fairy Garden, where you can add little stones to make pathways; plants become trees and maybe you have a broken pot that can be turned upside down to become a house. There are lots of ideas for this on Pinterest. The one below is my daughter's where she has been given fairies and props to add to it and in real life has been extended out of the pot and to the surrounding area with mini seesaws and other homes in pots using bits and pieces she found. Something similar can be recreated indoors in a pot or tray. They can use a small toy such as a lego or playmobil figure or we often make stick fairies in Forest School for small world play. This is a very simple craft to make but engages children in play as well as any bought fairy or toy. You could also use a peg or even pencil. See my video on how to make one and say hello too <https://youtu.be/laNzbPB4Gal>. Another option is to make a dinosaur world. In a gardening tray you can add mud and a swamp or some grass and sticks as trees and you will have the perfect dino landscape...



## Magic Potions & Wands

Continuing the magic theme, but in a larger scale, grab a small pot or cup and make a magic potion. Collect little items from nature, like a pinch of a petal or leaf; a bit of dirt, a stone then add some drops of magic water (it can be coloured with food colouring for some extra magic); use a specially chosen stick to stir it with and hey presto you will have a magic potion that can make everything smell of strawberries or turn everybody into frogs!



**Woodland Trust Nature Detectives** Magic potions Weave a little woodland magic

Take a beaker or a small bowl out on your adventure. Add a splash of water and find a special stick for stirring.

As you explore the wood, gather bits and pieces that catch your eye.

- A brightly coloured leaf
- A fluffy feather
- Glossy berries
- Some scented pine needles...

Make a rhyme about each ingredient you add:

Use your stick to stir everything up, then find a special spot to pour out your potion and make a wish.

Next a shiny acorn goes in, big trees grow from this tiny thing!

**Magic woodland potions**

If you go down to the woods today you'll find heaps of ingredients for a magic potion.

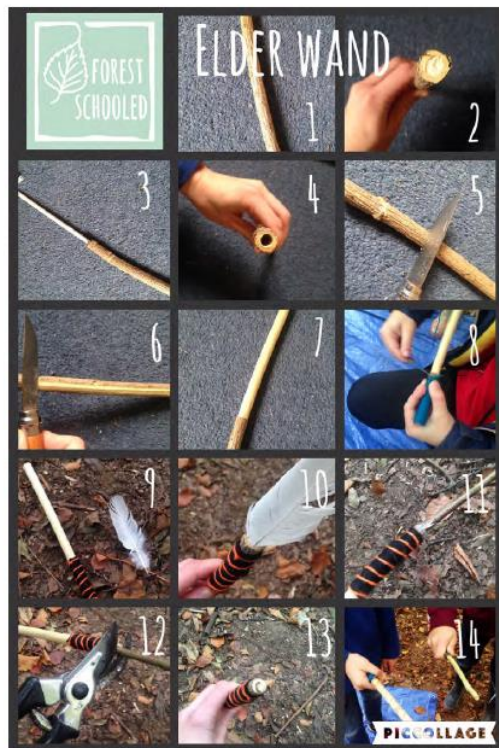
For more on magic and other crafts for your next woodland visit, and don't forget there are loads more brilliant activities to download on our website: [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) / [www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk) 0200 200 9901 [naturedetectives@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:naturedetectives@woodlandtrust.org.uk) #naturedetectives @woodlandtrust

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If you have a Harry Potter fan in your house then this trick with a stick will be perfect. Find a wand sized stick or stick like object- cane, chopstick even a BBQ skewer and then simply wrap some wool/string/thread around it to make a handle and then maybe tie on a special decoration such as a feather. If your child is competent with a knife, they can take the bark off (newly cut sticks are easier as less dry) remembering to move the knife away from the body and ensuring they are in a safety zone, where no one else can be harmed. The stick can be decorated with pen or paints too. Below are some instruction for a very special wand if you have an Elder tree you can snip a little piece of (this would work with a garden cane too as they are hollow in the middle)...



For those interested in bringing a little magic to your life, here's a little 'how to' for making wands with elder. Hope you find it useful!

1. Cut a length of elder (about elbow to wrist length)
2. Choose which end will be your handle.
- 3-4. Use a tent peg or similar to poke the spongy pith into the handle end (I did not push the pith all the way through, just created a hollow about 3 inch deep into the handle end of the wand).
5. Use a knife to score a line all the way around the wand about a hand's width from the handle end of your wand.
- 6-7. Strip the bark off from where you made the score mark to the tip of the wand. Leave the bark on the handle end.
8. You can leave it as it is if you like the natural look or you can wrap wool around the handle to personalise your wand.
9. Choose an item to go inside the handle of your wand (this is what gives it its magic of course!). I chose a feather.
10. Insert your item into the hollow you made in your handle.
11. Find a stick that has a diameter that fits snugly into the hollow and push it in about an inch.
- 12-13. Trim the end of the stick off. This creates a seal to keep your item safely inside your wand
14. Use your wand to cast some spells! My favourite is 'Dancealotis!', which makes a person's legs dance uncontrollably

## Let's go Camping

Our imaginations are so powerful we can even go away on a family holiday! Last weekend my Cubs, along with our group Scouts and Beavers had a 'Camp at Home'. They were encouraged to either put up a tent in their garden or build themselves a den or shelter in their house or garden, as long as they weren't in their own bedroom they got a Nights Away badge (one is even still camping out in his front room, which is making watching the TV interesting for the rest of the family!). So, grab a sheet and some pegs, use tables and chairs to make a cosy den to sleep in and see some of the dens that Freddy Forest School Teddy made in our house...

1. **Make Camp**-Firstly, you do not need a tent or a garden to take part. Your tent can be a den made from sheets and your kitchen table or using chairs and your sofa in the front room, you could make something amazing. Here are some ideas:

### Inside

Table Den; Blanket Fort or if you have a pop-up tent use this. Inside you won't need a sleeping bag you can use a duvet/blanket/mat on the ground and then a pillow and some covers on top. Don't forget your teddy!



This den was made with a table, chairs, pegs & bunting! It even has a sleeping and living area. Perhaps you could add fairy lights or some other decorations.



This one was two chairs with string tied between them and then a sheet put over and some heavy books to hold it in place. Again, some bunting! Cosy...

### Outside

Tent; trampoline; shed; hammock or a den made from plastic/waterproof sheet. If you have tent then great, if not a great den can be made on a trampoline, if it is going to be a dry night you can just put a sheet over the top, but ideally use a plastic sheet over the safety netting to make a roof. You might have space in your shed to set up your mat and sleeping bag or if you have a hammock and some sturdy tying points such as trees then this is a fun place to spend the night, especially if you can rig up a shelter over it in case of rain. Finally, you can make a den like the indoor ones, but with waterproof coverings. You could tie a piece of string onto posts or fences. Make it low down to the ground and try to not have any gaps for drafts to keep you warmer. Put something waterproof on the ground to stop your sleeping kit getting wet. It can be very cold at night in April so if you do not have a three-season sleeping bag you will need extra blankets/duvet and cosy nightwear.

**Maybe we can all camp at home on the Bank Holiday Friday next week?...**



**play • learn • connect**