Outdoor Adventure Program

RISK MANAGEMENT:

Understanding the BENEFITS & HAZARDS of Outdoor Play and Learning

We have crafted this critical resource to help you understand the many ways we protect children, staff, and the land we tread upon. We want everyone to thrive outdoors, which requires a commitment to thoughtful planning and safety routines. As you read through this resource, we hope it illuminates the thorough preparation of staff and the big ways in which nature is your child's third teacher. We are aware of the risks that children and staff are exposed to nature and the public environment.

Each section is divided by tabs. The "Hazards" section includes dangers and risks that we may, or likely will, encounter outdoors. Information is provided to demonstrate the potential for harm and ways we can prevent and mitigate each hazard. The "Benefits of Outdoor Play and Learning" section includes current peer-reviewed research, references, and testimonials to demonstrate why children benefit from our program.

Staff reviews and edits the information contained here as we discover additional benefits, hazards, or useful resources. If you have a question, suggestion, or ideas about other items to include, please feel free to contact the site supervisor.

WEATHER

We will follow the saying there is not such a thing as bad weather, only bad clothes!

Children in attendance the outdoor afterschool programs are expected to participate in all planned activities. Only severe weather conditions prohibit this activity. For example, during thunderstorms, rain, sleet, excessive snow, or high winds, extreme cold under 30 degrees or higher than 100 degrees, or state emergency, we may cancel the outdoor program. A newsletter will be sent to the parents weekly with weather expectations and materials the children may use so parents can plan in advance for the week.

Please send adequate clothing for the weather; remember to label all clothing. We will go out to learn and explore the weather when it is raining, muddy, snowing, and have fun learning to live and interact with the weather and nature elements. Teachers are expected and prepare to follow the children’s desires and accommodate children if necessary.

To stay in accordance with the CDC and New York State Health guidelines, we will be limiting the number of children in each group to 12 children with two adults. We will limit the sharing of
objects (e.g., electronic equipment, arts and crafts materials, etc.) and will thoroughly disinfect toys/ materials before and after each child has used them.

Recommended Reading:  
*There's No Such Thing as Bad Weather: A Scandinavian Mom's Secrets for Raising Healthy, Resilient, and Confident Kids (from Friluftsliv to Hygge)* by Momma's Media

**Arts and Athletics respects the wildlife in Central Park. We will never feed or approach a wild, stray, or injured animal.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAZARDS</th>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife Insects</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bees and wasps</td>
<td>Cultural knowledge about self, community, and land (place-based aspects of learning) <strong>Friendships</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(European hornets, yellowjackets, bald-faced hornets, bumble bees, honey bees) Ants (fire ants)</td>
<td>Teamwork and collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horse and deer flies</td>
<td>Perspective-taking/empathy</td>
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<td>Mosquitoes</td>
<td>Navigating Conflict with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>spiders (types here)</td>
<td><strong>Emotional</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown recluse</td>
<td>Values of empathy, gratitude, kindness, and compassion <strong>Regulating emotions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Black widow Chiggers/mites Ticks/Fleas</td>
<td>Stress reduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>wild animals (bats, coyotes, raccoons, opossums, etc.)</td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stray animals</td>
<td>Mental health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birds (feathers, pellets, nests)</td>
<td>Reflection and appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species of Plants</td>
<td>Emotional quotient (EQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree limbs, branches, and roots</td>
<td><strong>Cognition</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tree climbing</td>
<td>High order thinking skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poison ivy, White Snakroot, Jimsonweed, Pokeberry, The Apple Tree, Nuts and seeds (allergens)</td>
<td>Problem-solving and resourcefulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mushrooms</td>
<td>STEM-based learning (science, engineering, technology, math) <strong>Creative and expressive arts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thorns and brambles</td>
<td>Language and literacy development</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Nightshade fruits
- Fresh air/impact on cognition

### Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plants
- Impact on cognition Vitamin D intake from sunshine

### Water/Stream and pond exploration
- Naturally occurring bacteria in the soil

### Wind/Wind advisories
- **Physical development**

### Hyper- and hypothermia
- Vestibular, proprioception, spatial Gross motor, locomotor

### Dehydration Sun/Sunburn
- Fine motor

### Heat exhaustion and heat stroke
- Hand-eye coordination

### Storms (thunder, lightning, rains) Snow and ice
- Sensory integration

### Hurricanes/Earthquakes
- Eye health

### Tool use (knives, peelers, saws, hammers, hand drills, etc.) Unfamiliar persons
- Decreased symptoms of ADD and ADHD

### Stranger safety/ Residents of the upper west side and tourist
- **Ecological Identity**

### Roads/Crossing streets/ walking on the Trails
- Stewardship and care-taking habits

### Carrying or playing with sticks/Collecting from nature
- Connection with indigenous heritage/origins of land

### General injury with active play (first aid/CPR) Foraging
- Personal connection with the natural world

### Animal scat
- Caring and concern for nature

### Litter
- Understanding and respect for diversity and interconnectedness of ecosystems

### RESOURCES AND BOOKS:

Each source we reference is local, state, federal, or widely-recognized and reputable organizations with relevant information on a given topic.

Websites:

- [Wildlife New York City](#)
- [Central Park Conservancy](#)
• New York City Department of Parks & Recreation
• North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE)
• American Academy of Pediatrics
• National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
• Center for Disease Control (CDC)

Books:

• Coyote’s Guide to Connecting with Nature by Jon Young, Evan McGown, and Ellen Haas
• Nature-Based Preschool Professional Practice Guidebook by NAAEE
• Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of the Plants by Robin Wall Kimmerer
• A Forest Days Handbook: Program Design for School Days Outside by Eliza Minacci and Megan Teach out
• Barefoot and Balanced: How Unrestricted Outdoor Play Makes for Strong, Confident, and Capable Children by Angela Hanscom
• Botany in a Day by Thomas J. Elpel
• Nature Play Workshop for Families: A Guide to 40+ Outdoor Learning Experiences in All Seasons by Monica Wiedel-Lubinski and Karen Madigan
• Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens: The Handbook for Outdoor Learning by David Sobel and Patti Bailie
• Play the Forest School Way by Jane Worrall
• The Great Outdoors: Advocating for Natural Play Spaces for Young Children by Mary Rivkin and Deborah Schein
• The Biophilia Hypothesis by Kellert and Wilson
• There’s No Such Thing as Bad Weather: A Scandinavian Mom’s Secrets for Raising Healthy, Resilient, and Confident Kids (from Friluftsliv to Hygge) by Momma’s Media