



Minister of State for Social and Family Development, and Foreign Affairs Mr Sam Tan, at the launch of the 'Creative Conversations' kit



Participating in an outdoor activity using herbs, spices and plants

Creative Conversations: The Scent of Spices (Parents' Edition)

Not sure how or where to begin your outdoor journey with your child? Download the resource kit for plenty of activity ideas (go.gov.sg/thescentofspices).



CONNECTING KIDS & NATURE

Spice-themed activities make outdoor learning fun & educational for children.

Various studies have found that children reap a host of benefits from spending more time outdoors. It can help to reduce childhood obesity, lower the rate of myopia, improve mental well-being, advance social and emotional skills, and enhance physical development. Ideally, children should spend two to three hours outdoors daily, as advised by the NurtureSG Taskforce.

This may seem daunting. But making a conscious effort to do something outdoors together is not only beneficial for the child's holistic development, but also fosters parent-child bonding, communication and relationship-building.

START YOUR OUTDOOR JOURNEY

Jointly developed by ECDA, the National Library Board (NLB), the National Museum of Singapore (NMS) and the National Parks Board (NParks), the "Creative Conversations" kit is a resource that enables parents and teachers to harness the rich learning opportunities of the outdoors for their children.



Carrying out a parent-child activity suggested within the resource kit

"The outdoors provides children with a vast space to explore natural elements in a less structured way. It helps children to explore, discover and understand the world around them in an uninhibited way," says Ms Farah Mashhur Ali, Case Manager at Iyad Perdaus Child Development, after experiencing the learning journey at the Spice Garden at Fort Canning.

Besides providing fun ideas for parents and children to enjoy time spent outdoors, the kit also aims to develop children's appreciation of Singapore's rich history, culture and heritage through the spices and herbs. It includes story activity cards that provide outdoor activities revolving around spices and herbs, as well as recipes created by children for children.

How to Plan a Fun and Educational Nature Walk

Educators' top five tips for parents.

- > **Research the venue**, or better yet, recce the location beforehand on your own.
- > **Structure the activity loosely** and give your child the option to suggest what he would like to explore.
- > **Engage your child in a conversation** during the activity. Ask questions that prompt him to think and make meaningful connections.
- > **Let your child take a little risk outdoors.** A mild rain or a little fall are all part of growing and learning.
- > **Have fun together** and create memorable moments!



ECDA Fellow Mrs Hephzi See, Principal of Choa Chu Kang Bible Centre Kindergarten, offers some tips on how to use the materials in the kit. "Plan a visit with children using the map. Discuss the different sections in Fort Canning Park so that they will be able to relate to the places they visit. The activity book comes with pictures of herbs, spices and plants which can be made into matching games. Engage children in a cooking session using the recipe book. Have conversations on the textures, colours and shapes of the spices. Let them smell the spices and learn their names. Children can be involved in counting, weighing, washing and mixing of items. All these experiences help stimulate healthy brain development."

SEE, TOUCH, TASTE

Reflecting on the learning journey, Ms Ali says, "Walking through Fort Canning's Spice Garden, we smell the potted earth and encounter different textures. The hands-on interactive experiences allow children to relate better through doing and being involved in their own learning."

Ms Shamala Ganessaraj, 41, who attended the official launch of the kit at Fort Canning Park on 13 July 2019, relates how much she and her daughter, Aarya, 6, enjoyed the experience. "We didn't know there were so many interesting things to explore in Fort Canning Park," says Ms Ganessaraj. "We enjoyed the leaf imprint activity which involved pressing a leaf onto air dry clay. My daughter is a tactile learner so she loves picking up, touching and molding things."

Ms Ganessaraj will continue to use the 'Creative Conversations' kit to explore nature with her daughter. "It's a great resource for parents with younger children, as I wouldn't know how to put something like this together," she says. "Aarya loves the section where you can document your findings."

"I enjoyed picking up leaves and talking to my mum about their different colours, sizes and shapes," says Aarya. "I am also excited to cook with spices."



Getting to know the various spices



Into The Wild

Why nature education is important for children.

"Multiple research studies have linked greenery to benefits such as improved problem-solving abilities, greater attentiveness, superior cognitive functioning, more developed psychomotor skills and the ability to cope with stress," notes Mr Lim Liang Jim, Group Director, National Biodiversity Centre, National Parks Board.

He also believes that it is important to teach children about our natural heritage. "As future beneficiaries of our environment, they need to know that they too have a responsibility to ensure the conservation of our biodiversity and ecosystems," he says.

Mr Lim outlines three tips for parents to create meaningful outdoor experiences for children in parks.

- **ENGAGE THEIR SENSES.** Through experiential learning, children are more likely to enjoy themselves and retain what they've learnt. At Singapore Botanic Gardens and some other parks, walks and workshops for preschoolers are accompanied by storytelling sessions. Trained guides encourage children to use their senses by smelling flowers, crushing leaves or touching tree bark.

✓ Sign up for NParks' guided walks at www.nparks.gov.sg/gardens-parks-and-nature/walks-and-tours

- **INCULCATE GOOD VALUES.** Teaching children to do their part for the environment reinforces the values of care, responsibility and civic-mindedness. When in a green space, parents can remind their children not to remove any plants or animals from their natural habitat and to stay on the trail in nature reserves.

✓ Find out more about the dos and don'ts in our green spaces: www.nparks.gov.sg/gardens-parks-and-nature/dos-and-donts

- **SET A GOOD EXAMPLE.** When children see parents keep a respectful distance from wildlife and ensure shared spaces are kept clean, there is a higher chance that they too will do their part to conserve our biodiversity.

✓ Follow the DIY trail guides for our parks and gardens: www.nparks.gov.sg/gardens-parks-and-nature/walks-and-tours/going-on-a-diy-walk



learn

win



→ Three lucky readers will win a 'Creative Conversations: The Scent of Spices (Parents' Edition)' kit. Each kit comes with an activity booklet, a map of the places of interest, a recipe book, seven story cards and activity materials such as coloured papers, a papier-mâché pot and a white cloth for tie-dying.

Simply answer this question:
Name one activity your child can do with the 'Creative Conversations' resource kit.

Send your answer to beanstalk@mediacorp.com.sg with your name and contact details.
Closing date: **15 November 2019**



Go Out & Play!

Sparking your child's interest in the great outdoors.



> A Hebridean Alphabet

By Debi Gliori

Through this vividly illustrated book, spend a day in the Hebrides (a group of islands off the coast of Scotland) exploring the beautiful landscapes. Each page introduces words beginning with a different letter of the alphabet and exposes children to unusual words not found in typical alphabet books. This is a book that brings joy to nature enthusiasts and sparks the imagination of children.

Contributed by *Norah Ismail, Librarian, National Library Board*



> Outdoor Play: 100 Ideas for Early Years Practitioners

By Julie Mountain

This e-book in the 100 Ideas series offers educators practical advice on outdoor play activities. From teaching tips to ideas on involving parents in their child's education, this book adopts a well-rounded approach. There are even ideas by outdoor play experts to help you add this essential element to children's early education.

Contributed by *Manemegalai A, Librarian, National Library Board*

Events @ NLB



Check out these programmes at the libraries.



Play Booths in the Library ~ Let's Play Out Of The Box

Learn about the community while enjoying fun activities, games and handmade toys at play booths in the library! Free admission.



English Puppet Show presented by Children Puppet Castle

Enjoy a performance by Children Puppet Castle, featuring veteran puppeteer Mr Christopher Chow Pak Hong. After the performance, try your own hand at working the puppets. Free admission.

For more information on the dates, timings and venues, please visit www.nlb.gov.sg/golibrary.

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Grow@Beanstalk is your one-stop early childhood (EC) resource portal for inspiring stories, useful tips and activity ideas, as well as the latest happenings from the EC sector.



Visit www.ecda.gov.sg/growatbeanstalk, or scan the QR code



You can also share your passion of "Giving a Good Start to Every Child" by "liking" our Facebook page for daily content, and engaging with other parents and EC educators.



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It's not just work when you work with children. If you aspire to make a lifelong impact, join us as an Early Childhood Professional to shape the next generation.



Find out more about a career in early childhood at www.ecda.gov.sg/ShapeOurTomorrow, or scan the QR code.

