

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Grounded!



The bumblebee drinks nectar from a bottlebrush plant.



Take the family on a bike ride on the Moraga/Lafayette Trail to see the display of birdhouses.

Photos Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian

"I rejoice when I see anyone, and especially children, inquiring about flowers, and wanting gardens of their own, and carefully working in them. For the love of gardening is a seed that once sown never dies, but always grows and grows to an enduring and ever-increasing source of happiness." – Gertrude Jekyll

Like airplanes and cruise ships across the country, many of us continue to be grounded. As we embark on our 11th week of staying at home and online learning, adults and children are naturally a bit antsy.

When I was a kid and school was closed for whatever reason, my very first instinct was to get outside and explore. I wanted to be on the tractor plowing the fields with my dad, tending the vegetable garden with my mom, or leading the rest of the ranch kids on an adventure through the creeks and hills to identify flowers, plants, amphibians and insects.

I'm certain that my love of the natural world began as a child. As an adult, I have always felt it was important to share this passion with youth. Gardens offer a crucial way for people to access and experience the natural environment. Nature is a public health resource that is available to everyone. Since it's springtime and we are all grounded, why not employ some fun activities that the entire family

can enjoy together while practicing social distancing?

Here are a few ideas that I've implemented with my family and students over the years.

1. Begin a nature journal. Use a spiral binder, a notebook, or design a beautiful unique diary. Go outside and observe. Use crayons, markers, or paints to illustrate and chronicle what you see.
2. Record nature sounds. You'll hear different sounds at various times of the day. Crickets chirping, frogs croaking, birds singing, water tricking, wind whistling, squirrels chattering, bees buzzing. Make a personal meditation recording on your smartphone.
3. Underground exploration. The earth is crawling with activity. Underneath the surface of the soil, countless critters are busy at work. Go to a corner of your garden and gently dig up a trowel full of soil. What do you see? Earthworms? Millipedes? Sowbugs? Slugs? Are there spiders or other insects crawling? Note your findings in your nature journal.
4. Make a "stained glass" window. One of my favorite projects as a kid was picking pretty flowers to press. Instead of making a book, we made "stained glass" windows by pressing an arrangement of petals between two sheets of wax paper and ironing the wax paper. Make sure to place a thin dishcloth on top of the wax paper before ironing. The wax paper seals the flowers together creating a colorful window.

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