

PRE-VISIT DISCUSSION: Large or Small-group

To be implemented BEFORE arboretum visit 1

Objectives:

For children to be prepared and motivated for arboretum exploration (visit 1).

- Think about and share past experiences in the outdoors/nature
- Be introduced to the terms living, non-living, nature, and naturalist
- Inquiry skills: Communicating experiences and observations; generating ideas about living and non-living; making predictions; planning an investigation

What You Need: Large photos of some outdoor/natural environments like the woods, a pond, or a meadow cut from magazines or downloaded from the internet. Photos of the arboretum (in the packet). Chart paper and marker.

What to Do:

First: Talk about Previous Outdoor/Nature Experiences

Begin by assessing what types of outdoor/nature experiences children have had. Show children the photographs of outdoor natural environments one at a time. Have they ever visited the woods, a pond, or a meadow, with you and/or their families?

- If they have, invite them to describe their outdoor/nature experiences. Encourage them to use the photo as a prompt and ask questions like:
 - “What did you observe in the woods/meadow/at the pond?”
 - “What kinds of living things/plants and animals did you observe there?”
 - “Where there any trees? How would you describe them?”
- If they haven’t, invite them to describe experiences outdoors around their home, school, or neighborhood. What kinds of interesting plants or animals have they seen there? How would they describe them?
- Ask follow-up questions that help children think more about the plants and animals they remember. For example, if a child says she saw a bird in a tree, you may ask “What was the bird doing in the tree?” or “Why do you think a tree is a good place for a bird?”

Second: Talk about Being Naturalists

Introduce the idea of becoming “naturalists”. In your own words share the following information:

- Naturalists are people who explore nature and the outdoors.
- Naturalists study plants and animals and other **living** things. Sometimes they study **non-living** things they find outdoors like rocks, dirt, or shells.
- Naturalists are careful with the living and non-living things they find.

Third: Make a Prediction Chart

- Tell children that they will have a chance to be naturalists at the arboretum to observe living and non-living things. Pass out photos of the arboretum for children to look at and facilitate a short conversation about what kinds of living and non-living things they might find there.

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- Ask specific questions to probe their thinking like “What do you think we might find in the dirt?”; “What kinds of growing things do you think we might find?”; “What kinds of insects and other animals might we find in and around the trees?”
- Write down their thoughts and ideas on a prediction chart.
- Support children’s involvement in planning the arboretum investigation by asking questions like: “Where do you think we should look for living things at the arboretum? In the grass? In the dirt? In trees?”; “What kinds of tools should we take with us for digging?” and “How might we use magnifiers?”