

ROOTS & RAINBOOTS NATURE CO.

Slow childhood. Strong roots.

Regulation-First Nature Curriculum

Educator Edition · Ages 2–5

21 activity cards · facilitator edition

4 complete outdoor session plans

Everything gatherable — no kit to buy

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What is in this bundle

The Activity Cards

21 PAGES

21 cards, each with a facilitator front and a reverse carrying what children are building, learning objectives, what you need and a facilitator note. Printed two-up on Letter — cut along the centre line for 4×6in cards.

The Session Plans

32 PAGES

4 complete outdoor sessions for ages 2–5, each built on a real ecosystem at Poinsett State Park: sandhill, swamp, pond edge, and the boundary between them. Each runs 60–90 minutes and names its regulation goal before its content goal.

Gather Your Own Collection

2 PAGES

A two-page sheet listing everything the cards call for and where to find it — bark, stones, a hand lens, a box with a lid. Nothing needs to be bought from us. Includes the six safety rules that matter with children under five.

The Pedagogy

THROUGHOUT

Not a separate chapter — it is built into every page. Each card names what children are building before it names an activity, and each session plan states its regulation goal before its content goal. Three commitments run underneath: regulation before instruction, relationship before mastery, place before abstraction.

A NOTE ON HOW TO USE THIS

The card is not the curriculum. Every card here is an invitation, not a script — it opens the door, and then the child, the place and the relationship determine what happens next. Adapt freely. If a child's attention moves somewhere more interesting than your plan, follow it. That is the method working, not failing.

Open & Explore

The Collection Box as Ritual Object

5–10 MIN · ALL WEATHER · SENSORY / REGULATION

WHY THIS MATTERS

Every learning session begins with a ritual of arrival. The deliberate opening of the box cues the child's nervous system to shift into exploratory mode. Ritual objects help young children build predictability, which is the foundation of emotional safety.

SETUP & FACILITATION

- 1 Bring the closed collection box to an outdoor space or threshold area.
- 2 Sit together. Place the box between you.
- 3 “Shall we see what's inside today?” — lift the lid together slowly.
- 4 Remove items one at a time. Name each: rough bark, smooth stone, soft moss.
- 5 Let the child lead after the first item. Observe what they reach for first.
- 6 Take the box outside and continue exploration in a comfortable spot.

WHAT CHILDREN ARE BUILDING

- Sensory vocabulary
- Object permanence and ritual
- Transition regulation
- Child-led curiosity

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Child demonstrates calm, focused attention during the opening sequence.
- ✓ Child uses at least one sensory descriptor word (prompted or unprompted).
- ✓ Child selects an item of interest and engages with it for 30+ seconds.
- ✓ Caregiver successfully uses the opening ritual to support session transition.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Your whole collection — the box itself is the ritual object

FACILITATOR NOTE

The opening is as important as any activity. Do not rush it. The pace of the opening sets the pace of the session.

Nature Breathing Buddies

The Nervous System Reset

5–10 MIN · ALL WEATHER · REGULATION / BREATH / MINDFULNESS

WHY THIS MATTERS

Slow, rhythmic breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system — the body's rest-and-digest response. When children pair this breathing with a natural object, the object itself becomes a regulation tool they can access independently. This is the mechanism behind the Breathing Buddy: not a toy, but a self-regulation anchor.

SETUP & FACILITATION

- 1 Choose a Breathing Buddy from your collection: a smooth stone, bark, or a pinecone.
- 2 Hold it together in cupped hands.
- 3 Smell it: "Take one slow smell. Let the smell travel through your nose."
- 4 Breathe with it: "Breathe in slowly — smell the stone. Breathe out slowly."
- 5 Count four breaths together. Eyes closed if comfortable.
- 6 Practise independently: "Now you try. Tell me when you've done four."

WHAT CHILDREN ARE BUILDING

- Breath-based regulation
- Parasympathetic nervous system activation
- Sensory anchoring for emotional regulation
- Independent self-regulation tools
- Body awareness

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Child completes 4 slow breath cycles paired with the sensory object.
- ✓ Child independently initiates the breath sequence when offered the object.
- ✓ Child shows measurable calming after the breathing sequence.
- ✓ Child can select their own breathing buddy without prompting in future.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Smooth creek stone or bark piece as Breathing Buddy
- Cedar or pine bark for olfactory engagement

FACILITATOR NOTE

This works because the sensory object creates a conditioned association with calm. The more consistently you use it, the stronger the association becomes.

Measuring with Nature

Mathematics Before Numbers

10–20 MIN · ALL WEATHER · MATHEMATICAL THINKING / STEM

WHY THIS MATTERS

Before children can meaningfully use standard measurement units they must understand the concept of measurement: that length, weight and quantity can be compared using consistent units. Using natural objects as non-standard measuring units builds this conceptual foundation in a way that is embodied, memorable and mathematically sound.

SETUP & FACILITATION

- 1 Introduce the wooden rounds as measuring tools: “These wooden rounds are our units.”
- 2 Measure length: “How many rounds long is this stick? Let’s line them up.”
- 3 Measure self: “How many sticks tall are you? Lie down and let’s find out.”
- 4 Measure path: “How many footsteps from here to that tree?”
- 5 Compare and estimate before measuring: “Which do you think is longer?”
- 6 Record in the journal: draw the object and write the measurement.

WHAT CHILDREN ARE BUILDING

- Concept of measurement
- Non-standard unit measurement
- Estimation and prediction
- Comparison language (longer, shorter, heavier, lighter)
- Pre-numerical mathematical thinking

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Child measures 3 objects using non-standard units and states the result.
- ✓ Child makes an estimation before measuring and compares it to the result.
- ✓ Child uses comparative language correctly.
- ✓ Child records a measurement in the notebook with drawing.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Wooden rounds or slices as measurement units
- Stones for weight comparison
- A nature journal or plain notebook

FACILITATOR NOTE

Use the vocabulary consistently: unit, how many, estimate, measure. You are building mathematical language through repetition.

Gather Your Own Collection

Every activity card in this deck works with materials you can gather, borrow, or already own. Nothing here needs to be bought from us.

Textures

Rough, smooth, soft, hard. Variety matters more than quantity.

- A piece of bark with deep ridges
- A smooth river or creek stone
- Moss or lichen, dried
- A feather (found, not taken from a nest)
- A dried flower head or seed pod
- Something unexpectedly soft — a seed tuft, a lamb's ear leaf

Loose Parts

Things with no fixed purpose. These do the most work in the deck.

- 8–12 wooden rounds or branch slices, sanded smooth
- 10–15 smooth stones, roughly matched in size
- A handful of pinecones
- Short sticks of even length, ends sanded
- Shells, if you are near water

Treasures

The small, remarkable things a child will want to hold and keep.

- Whatever they find and cannot put down
- A fossil, a quartz pebble, a cicada shell
- Anything with a story attached to where it came from

Tools

Four objects. None need to be expensive.

- A hand lens or magnifying glass — a plastic one is fine
- A small notebook and a pencil
- A sorting tray, muffin tin, or three shallow dishes
- A cloth bag for gathering

The Box

The container is part of the practice, not packaging.

- A sturdy box with a lid a child can open alone
- A biscuit tin, a wooden crate, a shoebox, a small basket
- Optional: a rope or fabric handle so it can be carried and dragged
- Let the child decorate it. It matters more once it is theirs.

Six rules that keep this safe

Children under five explore with their mouths. These are not optional.

Nothing smaller than 1¼ inches

For children under three, any object that fits inside a toilet roll tube is a choking hazard. Size everything against that tube before it goes in the box.

Nothing sharp, nothing splintering

Sand every cut end. Check sticks and wooden rounds again each season — wood dries and splinters.

No berries, no seeds, no nuts, no mushrooms

Many are toxic and all are choke-sized. Leave them outside where you found them.

Wash what you bring in

Rinse, scrub, then air-dry completely before anything joins the collection. Damp organic material grows mould.

Leave living things living

Nothing occupied, nothing growing, nothing from a nest in use. This is the first stewardship lesson and children learn it by watching you decide.

Know the rules where you are

Many parks and protected areas prohibit removing natural material. Where collecting is not allowed, observe and photograph instead — then gather from a garden, a verge, or a garden centre.

ONE LAST THING

The collection is never finished. It changes with the season and with what the child is drawn to. A box that looks the same in November as it did in May is a box nobody has been using.

THIS IS A FREE PREVIEW

The full Educator Bundle

You have just read a complete, unedited excerpt — not a teaser. Everything below is what the full edition adds.

21 ACTIVITY CARDS, NOT 3

Every card carries a facilitator front and a reverse with what children are building, four learning objectives, what you need, and a facilitator note. Laid out two-up on US Letter with cut lines for a 4×6in deck.

FOUR COMPLETE SESSION PLANS

Full 1–2 hour outdoor sessions for ages 2–5, written for four distinct zones — sandhill, swamp edge, pond, and habitat boundary. Arrival ritual through closing circle, with age differentiation and common challenges.

SAFETY AND SITE GUIDANCE FROM THE FIELD

Snake checks at swamp edges. Ratios near open water. What to do when a child pulls moss off a log. Written by a year-round state park camp host, not adapted from an indoor curriculum.

NOTHING TO BUY FROM US

The full Gather Your Own Collection sheet is included above in its entirety. No kit, no proprietary components — everything is gatherable or already in your cupboard.

LAUNCH PRICE · \$39 FOR THE FIRST 25 BUYERS, THEN \$59

59 printable pages. Instant download.

rootsrainboots.org/curriculum

Written at the parks where it is taught.

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