

Arts, Environment and the Child: Walking the Wheel of the Seasons

Fall, **Winter**, Spring
2005-06



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Wednesday evenings, 5:30-9:30

Five Saturdays, 9:00-5:00

In Winter – 21 Jan, 4 & 18 Feb, 4 & 18 March

Sem II D1105 and field sites

Project & Activity Fee: \$25 per quarter
8 credits

ProgramDescription

The relationship between humans and nature is at the very core of our existence. Children and adults often lose their connection with nature in education that strives to make us more “civilized.” Animals, plants, rocks, clouds and even microbes could be considered sentient beings. Children often intuitively know this and, as adults, we can be consciously re-awakened to this. In the program we will explore how deeper experience of nature’s movement through the seasons can enrich our lives. We will also explore ways in which we can support children and strengthen their connection and understanding of nature’s seasonal transformations. Our curriculum will include nature observation and journaling, plant study, cultural perspectives on health care and botanical medicine as well as practical skills with medicinal plants and gardens, consideration of calendars, creation of festivals, and practice of expressive arts inspired by the wonder and beauty of nature. We will also spend time with children in schools sharing what we have learned and learning from what children bring to us. Our time together will be a celebration!

Credits:

2 – Environmental/Cultural Education

2 – Expressive Arts

2 – Botanical Studies (including Botanical Medicine)

2 – Community Service Project: Credits to be determined by project selection

Program Learning Objectives

1. To recognize and deeply experience diverse cultural perspectives on the movement of nature through the seasons.
2. To enrich our abilities to perceive seasonal expressions of nature as well as to recognize these expressions within ourselves, thus experiencing our humanness as a part of nature.
3. To translate these deepening awareness and abilities into activities that can help create similar deepening in children.
4. To observe and understand various aspects of child development as well as to observe, critique and enrich educational contexts.
5. To become better acquainted with plants in general and better able to engage with plants in daily life, including as medicine.
6. To strengthen our abilities to manifest ourselves creatively through visual arts.
7. To create community and provide a forum for communities to celebrate the changing of the seasons.

Winter Themes

In Winter, we will go beyond the surrender and loss that accompanied Autumn into Winter's rest, inner-exploration and dreaming. We will deepen our trust that the in-breath follows the out-breath and renewal follows the appearance of death and, in so doing, will ready ourselves for the energetic emergence of Spring! In this journey, we will be guided by many understandings drawn from non-Western traditions. Specifically, our "walk on the wheel" during Winter will include Tai Ji practice, discovering medicinal plants that support the nervous system and how to use them, exploring concepts in botany related to roots and stems, nature and dream observation/journaling and drawing, consideration of calendars and festivals, and listening to what the "garden" asks at this "time on the wheel." Our studies will be grounded in various readings as well as intensive work on selected projects and with children in a selected local school. Our community and program celebrations will focus on the Lunar New Year. Through the richness of our activities, we will seek to understand how Winter's "themes" manifest in nature, in culture, in community, in schools, and in ourselves. And we will become more fully alive as we engage ourselves – and children around us – in recognizing & harmonizing with these themes.

Texts

- 1) *Staying Healthy with the Seasons*, Elson Haas
- 2) *A Kid's Herb Book*, Lesley Tierra
- 3) *Nature Journaling or Keeping a Nature Journal*, Leslie & Roth
- 4) *How Children Learn*, John Holt
- 5) *Festivals Together*, Fitzjohn, Weston & Large

Note: Most of these texts will be used all year. Also, Reading Packets will be placed on Closed Reserve in the Library where you can make a copy for yourself.

Additional recommended reading: *Embrace Tiger, Return to Mountain*, Chungliang Al Huang (Lunar New Year Special Guest), and *The Dancing Wu Li Masters*, Gary Zukav (the first chapter is about Chungliang who inspired this book on quantum physics.)

Assignments

Weekly Readings

Project Assignments – includes Curriculum Work (Log, Reflections, Presentation)

Plant Study (Research, Harvest & Preparation, Drawing, Narrative)

Winter Nature/Dream Journal

Garden Activity

Note: Many of our assignments and much of our program communication will occur through our program Web Site. Students will receive Web training during the first two weeks of the quarter.