

WILDFLOWERS

NATURE

SCHOOL

PARENT HANDBOOK

For *Scouts* program

2010 • 2011

# PROGRAM

## PHILOSOPHY

Education has come so far from the original, innate way that humans learned for millennium. With extended family always around in natural settings, kids used to observe, explore, imitate, question, and watch their mentors in a natural setting. They learned by discovery, experimentation and very keen awareness. At Wildflowers Nature School, we try to allow the space for that unfolding of inquisitiveness and exploration, for experiencing the wonder and the spirit in special moments in nature. For in those moments lies the heart of education that will last a lifetime.

## VISION STATEMENT

Running with the natural exuberant wonder of a child, we nurture academic inquisitiveness, confidence, imagination, creativity, and a connection to, gratitude for and understanding of the world around them. This will become a solid place within each child that they can continually return to for growth, values, compassion, wisdom and joy in their lives. By fostering a love of nature, these children will naturally adopt practices of stewardship, sustainability and respect for the beauty and fragility of the planet.

## WHAT IS SCOUTS?

"Scouts" is a series of classes for kids on topics related to nature. "Scouts" is a club, a community of children exploring, discovering, creating, and having fun together. "Scouts" is a community of families developing a relationship to nature, celebrating seasons, noticing what goes on in the outside world, creating with what nature has to offer, and exploring the great outdoors together. "Scouts" is a program created to bring families closer to nature and to fill the gap of outside play that this generation of kids so sorely needs. "Scouts" is based on the scouting model, but led by a professional environmental educator. Class is limited to 8 students.

## WHEN IS SCOUTS?

The kids will spend Tuesday afternoons at Wildflowers Nature School. The program will start at 3:30, but care is available before & after, from 2 to 6pm. The program ends at 5:30 in Sept-Oct, & March-May and at 5pm Nov-Feb, with afterschool care possibly available until 6. There will also be at least 2 campfire events and a Harvest Festival ending in a campout. (We may be able to accommodate other scheduling needs of parents. Just ask & we'll see what we can do.) We operate from September 7<sup>th</sup> to June 21, with three 2 week breaks plus a 3 week break in December. Sign up is by session or year.

## WHAT DO KIDS DO IN SCOUTS?

We will spend our afternoons doing a variety of outdoor activities, catered to the seasons and the children's ages & interests. Some of the possible activities may be: tracking animals, creating habitat for animals (hanging bowls of water, making bird feeders, making pretend animal homes, etc.), team building (problem solving, creating, games, etc.), making cordage, "stalking", primitive skills and camp craft (building a fire, pitching a tent, making a hut, etc.), creating ceremony (celebrating events and seasons), art (recycled materials, watercolor, weaving with reeds and grasses, etc.), pretending to be animals ("animal forms", yoga-like imitations of animals), building cob & live willow structures, pioneering (knots & making cool stuff with rope like tree swings), making a gopher trap, gathering flowers for potpourri or sachets or tea, carving wood or soap,

orienteering (learning about a compass, where is north, "lostproofing" skills, etc.), photography, sustainability skills (recycling, use of resources, etc.), and definitely gardening, cooking, food preservation, and eventually raising a few animals. If the weather is horrendous outside, we may be indoors in our preschool classroom or kitchen, cooking, doing crafts or other activities related to nature, though we may still be outside.

## POLICIES & PROCEDURES

### CLOTHING

This is an outdoor-based program. It is absolutely imperative that you provide the proper clothing for us, as we will be sure your child is protected from the elements. We spend almost all of our time outside EVERY DAY, rain or shine, freezing or blazing. Please either send your child with or leave with us: 1. a real winter jacket, hat & gloves in the winter, 2. waterproof raincoat and rainpants if there's fog or chance of rain, 3. rubber boots every day, 4. shorts & short-sleeved shirt if it's going to be warm. Warning: mud play is core to the natural experience of children exploring nature. Please provide a full change of emergency clothes to be kept here for the session. A winter jacket is not just a fleece jacket or a lined raincoat. It should have a good deal of padding to insulate the child from cold. Hiking boots or workboots are great when it's not too wet outside, as kids can avoid getting a little wet on trail or when watering the garden, but still have good agility to climb trees and run. Long underwear underneath clothes is a good idea during cold snaps here. We will assume that if you want sunscreen on your child, you will do so before dropping him/her off, as we are not allowed to apply it. PLEASE LABEL EVERYTHING they bring to school. Second-hand stores and garage sales should have most everything above except rainpants. (I hear that REI online has them). If you're having trouble locating or affording any of these items, do not hesitate to ask for advice.

### WATER, HATS, GLOVES

Each child should have a water bottle that will not drip when on it's side and have their name on the bottom in permanent marker. If you choose to leave those items here, we'll care for them as needed.

### FORMS

The following forms must be kept on file and parent is responsible for updating when necessary: 1. Registration Form, 2. Health & Safety Information, 3. Immunization Record (blue card), 4. Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment, 5. Contract & Waiver (which references Calendar & this document), 6. Identification and Emergency Information, 7. Acknowledgement of receipt of: "Notification of Parents' Rights", "Caregiver Background Check Process," and "Consumer Awareness Information."

### TICKS

Of course, a school with a focus on nature is going to spend time daily in wild natural areas. Please check the areas your child cannot see EVERY SINGLE DAY when your child returns home. Long pants with tick repellent on them add protection. Deer ticks are extremely small. Ask us for a "tick card" if you aren't positive how to ID them. If you find a tick, take it to Sonoma County Health Dept for test and let us know results, please. If it bit your child (or you), get antibiotics from your Dr. ASAP.

### DROP-OFF & PICK-UP PROCEDURE

Drop-off is at 3:30pm. The program ends at 5:30 in Sept-Oct, & March-May and at 5pm Nov-Feb, with before & after care possibly available from 2pm and until 6pm. Routines are important to kids,

so we will be working on a smooth start & end. Please do not drop off or pick up a child without signing in or out. Please remind anyone else who is driving to sign in & out. Visual or verbal acknowledgement by a staff member is required upon delivery of children.

#### COMMUNICATION

We send out occasional email updates. If you do not have email, please either ask a parent if they can alert you when there's an email & give you a copy, or ask me & I will try to remember to give your child a copy the next time I see him/her. For logistical questions, after class is fine for a short chat, but please don't bring up sensitive issues about your child in front of them. If you have an issue to discuss, do not hesitate to call Bev at 479-1052. Conferences are encouraged as desired and child can either be included or not, depending on the agenda. Personal info that might be needed on some days, such as whether a child had a "melt-down", stayed up very late the night before, has a runny nose, etc. is best communicated verbally with me either by phone or in person. If anything major (such as divorce, death in the family, etc.), please try to contact Bev the day before school. It can be hard to pay full attention when parents are coming & going at drop-off time.

#### PARKING

Wildflowers is located on a private drive that is shared with 2 other households. PLEASE, for this program to continue, it is imperative that everyone give the neighbors the utmost respect by driving slowly and only parking in the driveway area of the school. Please pull as far in as possible to allow for the other cars to park in our driveway. Please don't park along the shared driveway. Use pullouts or back up whenever you see a car coming the other way. Carpooling is strongly encouraged and financially rewarded (see tuition rate chart). Apples, grapes, & raspberries on driveway belong to neighbors. Lastly, but most important, be VERY CAREFUL pulling in & out, as children are hard to see. Keep children close to you when walking so that they are safe at pick-up & drop-off times.

#### PICK-UP AUTHORIZATION

Children can only go home with people who are listed on the "Identification and Emergency Information" form. In the event of an emergency, people will be contacted in the order in which you list them on the form (check box 1 or 2 next to parent info if you have a preference which parent to call 1st). If I haven't met one of these authorized people, please present me with a photo of them ahead. If someone's not on this list, we will not be able to release your child to them unless it is amended by you in writing. Children will be released to parents only, even if a person is listed here, unless we have express permission for him/her to be picked up by one of these authorized people for that specific day or in case of an emergency. Appropriate car seats are required by everyone driving a child that still legally requires it to or from school or any school event.

#### COMMUNITY

There will be at least 2 campfires and a campout per session here. In the fall session, there is a Harvest Festival that precedes the campout. Families are also invited to our community work days, which sometimes end in potlucks. There may be other events added during the course of the year. Please write the dates from our calendar (attached) onto yours, as it is important in building community that the most people attend as possible. Many of our events are held jointly with our preschool families, joining in one Wildflowers community.

#### VOLUNTEERING

The garden and nature space are a very important part of your child's program here. Though kids love to play in the dirt and plant seeds, their contribution to the totality of care needed for a flourishing garden and healthy nature trail are limited. Parents are encouraged to attend the community work days, both to help create a flourishing environment for your child and to create a sense of community.

Offers to volunteer, whether during school to help with the children, or during non-school hours to assist with projects here, are warmly welcomed!

#### ILLNESS

If a child has had any of the following symptoms in the last 24 hours before a school morning, please don't bring them to school: fever, vomiting, upset stomach, stomach ache, sore throat, sneezing, wheezing, eye or nose drainage, diarrhea, skin problems, body aches, or any other symptom you think might indicate they are just coming down with something. If child shows any of those signs of illness at school, we will call parents to come pick up their child. IF a child's only symptom is a runny nose and/or a dry cough, AND they've had it for more than 2 days, it's OK to bring them. If medication is necessary for your child, there is a state form to fill out before we are allowed to administer it. If there have been contagious illnesses recently in your household, please inform us (including flu, etc.).

#### SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS and RATIO

Usually we will have 8 children and one teacher (Bev). Keeping it to 8 or less children provides for the mentoring relationship so necessary in the philosophy of this program. Occasions such as illness, important continuing education events, family emergencies, etc. may arise that would require a teacher to be away. We have a list of qualified substitutes that have the qualifications, background check and experience to provide your child with good care.

#### FOOD

We will provide a snack for the kids or we will all prepare it together. As much as we can, given season and other priorities of the day, we will try to incorporate food we harvest together (wild and cultivated).

#### BIRTHDAYS AND HOLIDAYS

We will have celebrations of gratitude, seasons, and the cycle of life. On your child's birthday week, do let us know if you want to do something special or send a special snack (but please leave out sugar and refined flour). We will do something special to honor the child depending on the age of the children. Family members are welcome to be present for the celebration if desired.

#### TOYS FROM HOME

To avoid conflicts, we ask that toys from home stay home. Children are welcome to bring in items that teach us something (nature items, unique pets, books, small machines, antiques, musical instruments, etc.). Small items from the natural world belonging to the season we are celebrating (or to all seasons) can be donated or loaned to our "Nature Museum" the kids will be making.

#### TV & VIDEO GAMES

**Children who watch TV and video games DO really affect the school environment and other children.** Their fantasy and discussion often focuses on scenes from TV or video games. Disturbing or over-exciting scenes are often acted out in order to deal with them. This is an age of imitation. We request families to be careful about selecting quality & quantity of media for children, especially the day before class. I have many handouts and ideas on how to limit TV & video games.

#### CELL PHONES

We ask that any children with a cell phone please turn the phone off during the hours the program is running. If there's an emergency in which you need your child to leave it on, please inform Bev.

#### ELECTRONIC WORLD VS. NATURAL WORLD

The greatest threat to returning our kids to the nature-based life children have had for millennium is to limit their electronic-based life. As a group mentoring children to bring them closer to nature, we can create support structures for parents and kids to assist each other to unplug in a plugged-in world. Let

me know if you would like to have a couple of classes, meetings, support groups, whatever, here to assist families in helping these children avoid the epidemic of teen media addiction.

## RATES

### RATE OPTIONS

In these hard economic times, we have tried to provide many options for ways to reduce the fee. Our rates can range from an average of \$36 to \$97/month depending on which options you choose. One of our main goals is to provide a true club for children. In order to provide the bond necessary for the children to feel kinship with peers and to provide for true mentoring, we do ask for a commitment to the full session. The session fee can be paid all at once (10% discount) or paid in 3 installments, on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Sept., Oct., and Nov. There is also a significant savings on the events if you choose to include them in your fee. If the year is paid in advance, another 10% discount can be taken.

### CARPOOL RATES

Carpooling is important in keeping with our philosophy of contributing to a sustainable society, as well as of respecting the neighbors. If one family drops off & picks up another family's child, that's a "2 car pool" and both families get the discount. Tuition goes down with the number of cars you take off the road. You will choose the tuition plan that best matches your guess as to how much carpooling you will do. (If a custom plan is needed, we can create one). The rate will be in our original contract according to the carpool plan you choose, so billing will not be necessary. If you need to choose a different carpool plan, let me know & we can change it mid-year, with the associated adjustment in tuition.

### SIBLINGS

Siblings in the same program receive 10% off for the 2<sup>nd</sup> child.

### DATES, HOURS & AFTER-SCHOOL CARE

The first session of Scouts runs from September 7 to December 7, 2010. The 2<sup>nd</sup> session runs from January 4 to April 5. The 3<sup>rd</sup> session goes from April 26<sup>th</sup> to June 21<sup>st</sup>. The weekly class runs on Tuesdays from 3:30 to 5:30 in Sept and Oct and 3:30 to 5pm Nov-December. Before class care can usually be pre-arranged, from 2 to 3:30 or 5/5:30 to 6pm at a rate of \$9/hr, payable in ½ hour increments (if only 1 child is signed up, rate is \$12/hr). We may be able to accommodate other scheduling needs of parents. Just ask & we'll see what we can do.

### LATE FEE

If parents are more than 15 minutes late picking up their child without previous arrangement, they may be billed \$20 per hour. If parents are more than 20 minutes late without previous arrangement more than 3 times in a school year, provider has the option of terminating this contract.

### SUBJECT TO SIGN-UP

If not enough children are signed up for a particular month, we reserve the right to cancel that month, (with full refund of that month for those who paid year in advance) or offer it at a higher rate.

### LATE PAYMENT FEE

Tuition paid after 10<sup>th</sup> of the month incurs 10% late charge.

### TRIAL MONTH

If you pay the year in full to attain the discount by September 1, 2010 and you or your child is not happy with the program, you can apply for a pro-rated refund for any reason by October 1, 2010.

## COMMITMENT

Commitment is by the month, if paying the weekly rate, or by the year if paying the annual rate. The arrangement can be terminated either by mutual consent, or by either party if safety or well-being of any child is at risk or if other party does not uphold the responsibilities contained herein. In these cases, refund of tuition will be given on a pro-rated basis, though deposit will not be refunded. For other reasons, such as but not limited to, changing mind, going on vacation, etc., responsibility for remaining installments of annual tuition are still due and payable. Custom arrangements can be made ahead.

## FALL SESSION

### RATE CHART 1 (Events not included):

EXTRA FOR EVENTS RATE:	NO CARPOOL	2 CAR POOL	3 CAR POOL	PEDESTRIAN
monthly fee:	\$63	\$54	\$48	\$43
Or pay session in full by 9/1/10:	\$170	\$145	\$130	\$117

Campout: \$65; campfire: \$15; festival: \$20; class: \$5 per person

Adults are 30%off, but parent or grandparent is required to attend.

Totaling \$167 for events for child + adult

## WHAT RATE INCLUDES

This includes the 1 ½ to 2 hour class per week. All families are invited to our community work days, where we learn how to build with cob or willow, possibly do some woodworking, take care of farm work or gardening or worm bins, etc.

## FALL SESSION

### RATE CHART 2 (Events included in rate):

EVENTS INCLUDED RATE:	NO CARPOOL	2 CAR POOL	3 CAR POOL	PEDESTRIAN
monthly fee:	\$97	\$82	\$74	\$67
Or pay session in full by 9/1/10:	\$262	\$223	\$200	\$180

Events come out to costing \$92 for child + adult

## WHAT RATE INCLUDES FOR FALL SESSION

The fee not only includes the weekly class (and workdays, of course), but also fully includes the fee for 1 child and 1 adult for 2 campfire events, a Harvest Festival ending in a campout, and 1 parent presentation on nature education. If a 2<sup>nd</sup> adult or 1 sibling wants to attend, too, trade for food donation or volunteer help are possibilities for those choosing this rate plan.

## POLICIES & PROCEDURES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

