

WILDFLOWERS NATURE SCHOOL

PARENT HANDBOOK
Scouts program

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 operate from September 7th to June 21, with three 2 week breaks & 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, creating habitats, team building (problem solving, creating, games, etc.), making cordage, "stalking", primitive skills and camp craft (fire, pitching a tent, forts/ shelters, etc.), creating ceremony (celebrating events and seasons), art (nature art, flower crafts, weaving with reeds and grasses, etc.), pretending to be animals ("animal forms", yoga-like imitations of animals), building cob & willow structures, pioneering (knots & making cool stuff with rope like tree swings), making a gopher trap, carving wood or soap, orienteering (learning about a compass, "lostproofing" skills, etc.), photography, sustainability skills (recycling, use of resources, etc.), and definitely gardening, cooking, food preservation, and eventually raising a few animals.

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 from 1st rain through June, 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 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 (think snow). 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 the cold season 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 & Lands End have them). If you're having trouble locating or affording any of these items, do not hesitate to ask for advice.

BACKPACK

Each day your child should have in a daypack the following items: water bottle that will not drip when on it's side, snack, and extra clothes (see above).

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 body 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.

ILLNESS

If a child has had any of the following symptoms in the last 36 hours before a school morning, please don't bring them to scouts: fever, vomiting, upset stomach, stomach ache, sore throat, sneezing, coughing, 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 runny nose or cough is present for more than 2 days, doctor's note can admit them back (or talk to Bev if this isn't reasonable in your special case). If medication is necessary for your child while here, there is a state form to fill out. If there have been contagious illnesses recently in your household, please inform us (including flu, etc.).

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. 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, skipped breakfast, etc. is best communicated verbally with me either by phone or in person in the morning. 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. Please make sure the drivers in your carpool are on listed on this form here. 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 our club-time or not, are warmly welcomed!

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

The kids should bring a snack each day & that will probably be one of our 1st activities, as often kids want a snack at this time of day. Once in a while, we'll prepare a snack together from food we harvest together (wild or 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 grains). We will do something special to honor the child depending on the age of the children.

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 really DO 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 a situation 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 today's electronic-based life of youth culture. 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 now to 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. See the rate charts below for options. 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 at least a full session. The session fee can be paid all at once (10% discount) or paid in 3 installments, on the 1st day of each month in that session. 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 (all 3 sessions), another 5% discount can be taken.

CARPOOL RATES

Carpooling is important in keeping with our philosophy of contributing to a sustainable society, as well as in respecting 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.

SIBLINGS

Siblings in the same program receive 10% off for the 2nd child.

DATES, HOURS & AFTER-SCHOOL CARE

The first session of Scouts runs from September 7 to December 7, 2010. The 2nd session runs from January 4 to April 5. The 3rd session goes from April 26th to June 21st. The weekly class runs on Tuesdays from 3:30 to 5:30 in Sept and Oct and 3:30 to 5pm Nov-December. There are 2 weeks off in October and February. Please ask for schedule for 2011-12 school year in spring 2011. Before class care can usually be pre-arranged, from 2 to 3:30 or 5/5:30 to 6pm at a rate of \$11/hr, payable in ½ hour increments (if only 1 child is signed up, rate is \$15/hr). We may be able to accommodate other scheduling needs of parents. Just ask & we'll see what we can do.

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.

LATE PAYMENT FEE

When installment plan is chosen and the monthly installment is received after the 10th of the month, a 10% late charge will be applied. We do not plan on doing billing for this program, so please remember on the 1st.

LATE FEES

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.

TRIAL MONTH

If you pay a session or year in full to attain the discount by the 1st day of the session or year and you or your child is not happy with the program, you can apply for a pro-rated refund for any reason within the 1st 4 weeks.

	NO CARPOOL	2 CAR POOL	3 CAR POOL	PEDESTRIAN
monthly fee:	\$90	\$77	\$69	\$62
Or pay session in full before 1 st day of session:	\$243	\$207	\$186	\$167

WHAT RATE INCLUDES:

The fee not only includes the weekly class (and workdays, of course), but it also includes at least one family campfire event and one special event (field trip or community service in community or else a family event here). The rate includes all immediate family members plus grandparents.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE