

# WILDFLOWERS NATURE SCHOOL

PARENT HANDBOOK

## Nature Connection Program for ages 5-12

2017-18

Location:  
10570 Mill Station Road  
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 54  
Graton, CA 95444

Owner: Bev Buswell, 707-481-2710  
Application/Inquiry Contact: Tori Power 802-236-9118

# **PROGRAM**

## PHILOSOPHY

Education has come so far from the original, innate way that humans learned for millennium. Kids learned by discovery, experimentation, keen awareness, observation, questioning, & imitating their mentors all day in a natural setting. We try to allow the space for that unfolding of inquisitiveness and exploration, for experiencing the wonder in special moments in nature. For in those moments lies the heart of education that will last a lifetime. 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 WILDFLOWERS NATURE IMMERSION PROGRAM?

Our Nature Immersion Program is an enrichment program with the purpose of connecting kids to nature. Because children are naturally curious, our wanderings turn into a scientific quest, a search for answers to our wondrous questions. The teacher is a mentor to kids, guiding them in their quests, diving into the wonder alongside them. The group becomes a community of children exploring, discovering, creating, and having fun together. The program attempts to fill the gap of missing lessons found in nature that this generation of kids is often missing out on. Through observing nature, observing oneself in nature & in the group, children tend to learn a lot about themselves and the nature of life. This program's almost exclusively outside. If it's really blowing rain or if any child is wet and cold, if our tipi's not enough, we might come inside for a little while in our preschool classroom. (Note: that's never happened).

## WHAT DO KIDS DO IN WILDFLOWERS HOMESCHOOL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM?

We will spend our day doing a variety of outdoor activities, catered to the seasons and the children's ages & interests. Most of our day, we'll be exploring, tracking, observing nature, and following our wonder. Through our explorations, we'll learn about how the world works (interdependency & ecology, physics, botany, etc.). We'll take our questions to field guides and use science tools such as magnifiers, compasses, & microscopes. We'll utilize the farm here, learning animal husbandry and gardening. We'll play games that help with understanding the natural world. Our other activities may include some of the following: creating habitats, team building (problem solving, creating, games, etc.), primitive skills and camp craft (fire, forts/ shelters, bows & arrows, etc.), art (nature art, weaving with grass, cattails, etc.), "animal forms" (imitations of animals), building cob & willow structures, using knives, orienteering (compass & "lostproofing"), photography, sustainability skills, & homesteading skills. Depending on the interests of the kids, we might make nature journals or field guides, use math in construction activities, or write poetry. This is all balanced with true nature play.

## WHO IS IN THE WILDFLOWERS HOMESCHOOL ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS?

Class is limited 7 students (with one mentor), ages 5-12. Some kids are enrolled in local public homeschool programs such as Pathways or Orchard View Charter Schools. Many kids are not. Some families choose an "unschooling" model. We're an approved vendor for Pathways, so those students can get some of the tuition here paid for by them.

Note: Private nature mentoring sessions are also available and are a great way to circumvent the social distractions & go deeper into nature connection in the mentoring relationship.

## SCHEDULE & STRUCTURE

The program is offered in 2 semesters this year. The 1st semester is 11 weeks and the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester is 15 weeks. There are 4 events during the year: Harvest Festival, Gratitude Potluck, Solstice Festival, and campout. It's possible we may offer (additional cost) a backpacking or family camping trip in late spring. See the calendar for exact dates. We meet on Mondays 9:30 to 2:30.

# **POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

## WHAT TO BRING

Each day your child should have in a daypack the following items: water bottle (at least 20 oz., that will not drip when on it's side), snack, lunch, and one extra set of clothes. Please label everything, especially clothing & jackets!

**CLOTHING:** This is an ALL OUTDOOR program. It is imperative that you provide the proper clothing, as we will be sure your child is protected from the elements. We spend all of our time outside EVERY DAY, rain or shine, freezing or blazing, sometimes crawling on our bellies in the forest or digging in the mud.

- All seasons (every day): a full change of clothes
- Winter / Cold / Rainy / Foggy-Wet: rain boots, a real winter jacket, hat & gloves, waterproof raincoat and rain pants
- Early Fall & Late Spring / Hot: shorts & t-shirt, swimsuit & sunhat

**Shoes:** Most mornings Nov-May the dew on the grass will soak through most shoes in 15 minutes. We recommend wearing boots & bringing a change of shoes for later in the day. Hiking boots or work boots or low top "Mucks" are great when it's not too wet outside, as kids can avoid wet feet, but still have good agility. From Nov.-May, though, still bring rain boots in case we work in the creek or wander in the wetland. We also allow bare feet when warm enough. If you are not comfortable with this, please let us know and we'll do our best to honor your preference.

**Keeping warm & dry:** In cold weather, 2 pairs of socks or one very thick pair should be worn under rain boots. 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. Long underwear or tights underneath clothes is a good idea during winter here and is essential in cold snaps. Layering clothing is great, as temperatures can easily be in the 30's at 9am and then 70's at 1pm. Second-hand stores and garage sales should have most everything above except rain pants, which can be found at Sebastopol Hardware, REI, LLBean, Lands' End, etc. Please label everything your child brings to school. Mud happens in nature school, so please provide a full change of clothes either in their backpack or to be kept here.

## TICKS

Of course, a school with a focus on nature is going to spend time daily in wild natural areas. Please check your child's body 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, keep it moist and take it to Sonoma County Health Dept. for test and let us know results, please. If it's bit your child (or you), get antibiotics ASAP from a specialist in Lyme Disease. One can be found through your local Lyme Disease support group (which can be found online).

## LOCAL OR NATIONAL EMERGENCIES

We reserve the right to close the school for a period of time if the administration believes that it is necessary for the safety of the children or adherence to law. There have been 2 occasions in the past that we've needed to do that: 1) an outbreak of swine flu, 2) local flooding & power outages. These are considered circumstances beyond our control and no reimbursement will be given to families for tuition paid for that time. Note: The Health Dept. has hinted that if there's a local outbreak of a disease that usually kids are vaccinated for, kids without that vaccine may not be allowed to attend our licensed program for a while.

## FORMS

The following forms must be kept on file and parent is responsible for updating when necessary:

1. Registration Form (application can do)	6. Identification and Emergency Information
2. Contract & Waiver (which references Calendar & this document)	7. Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment
3. Health & Safety Information (CA state form)	8. Acknowledgement of receipt of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Notification of Parents' Rights</li><li>• Caregiver Background Check Process</li><li>• Consumer Awareness Information</li></ul>
4. Wildflowers Health & Safety Form	
5. Immunization Record ("blue card")	9. Food Program Enrollment Form

We're also including an optional form for Medication Permission in the registration pkt. If you wish us to be able to administer any medication, from sunscreen to emergency use of Tylenol or most important, Benadryl, this must be signed. It would be a good idea in case of an extreme possibly life or death reaction to have permission to give a child's dose of Benadryl if they go into an anaphylactic reaction to something. We'll only administer what is expressly authorized by parents on the form. I suggest writing in "Children's Tylenol"; "Arnica" (homeopathic - calms most bigger owies); "Benadryl"; & "sunscreen". Please don't rely on us to apply sunscreen, though. We suggest applying it every morning before sending them here.

## VACCINES

Parents need to provide a copy of immunizations so that we can fill out the state mandated form we call "The Blue Card", an official immunization record we must have on file. If you do not vaccinate your child per the official recommended schedule, please talk to Bev. The following info is important for you to know: On June 30, 2015, SB (state bill) 277 passed eliminating the "Personal Beliefs Exemption". For those who are on the fence about (or against) vaccinating, I recommend:

1. Please look into the good hard science, not websites of personal stories, not some book of ranting in a single direction. But rather do a thorough review of multiple studies done by reputable institutions or researchers in an unbiased fashion with a scientific method. The trend of ignoring real science in our culture lately goes contrary to an educated society. But I know it's not easy to sort through all the conflicting studies on this difficult issue. Decide based on logical assessment of actual studies, not on what "group" you identify with.
2. Talk to your well educated medical professional for their opinion.
3. If you decide you want to veer from the state recommendations, the last I looked, it appears to me that if you provided us with a Personal Beliefs Exemption (state form) before Jan.1, 2016, you're good to go. That may have been a transition period, so please check the law. If you had a Personal Beliefs Exemption on file at another institution, from what I can tell, that's transferrable. Otherwise, you'll need a licensed physician to sign that your child has a special medical reason (which can be just family history) why they shouldn't follow the immunization schedule ("Medical Exemption"). If you need to know a local Dr., ask us.

I do not take a position that children should or should not get vaccines according to schedule, but I personally believe it should be up to parents, not the state, to decide. I will, and I hope you will, be an advocate for changing that law.

## ILLNESS & MEDICATIONS

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, diarrhea, skin problems, body aches, sneezing, coughing, eye or nose drainage, sibling highly contagious or any other symptom you think might indicate they are just coming down with something. For your children's & other's health, please be ok with he/she having a full day of wellness before returning. Many times, a child comes back to school without that extra day of rest and is so tired they end up in tears to go home. Other times, the illness takes its next turn. If you have any questions or your child just tends to have a runny nose or a cough for days after an illness, talk to the teacher. If medication is necessary for your child, see above. Please DO NOT give child medicine to bring to school (including vitamins, herbs & homeopathic meds). If there were contagious illnesses recently in your household, please inform us (flu, etc.).

## FOUND OBJECTS AT SCHOOL

Anything found on the property belongs to the school & owners, including but not limited to arrowheads and other historical artifacts, special rocks, etc. We do encourage nature collections by children so there will be plenty of natural objects they're allowed to take.

## DROP-OFF & PICK-UP PROCEDURE

See page 2 for drop-off & pick-up times. 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. 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 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. Please let us know very clearly if your child will be picked up that day by someone on your list. Appropriate car seats are required by everyone driving a child that still legally requires it to or from school or any school event. If not sure if it's required, check our indoor bulletin board for legal requirements.

## MENTORS (Teachers)

This fall our lead mentor is Tori Power, our head preschool teacher who has been a star teacher here for 4 years. You have no idea what a treat it is to have her teach this! Once in a while, Bev Buswell, the owner, or another qualified teacher, will substitute. Tori holds an Early Childhood Teacher Certificate, and begins enrollment in the Lifeways Waldorf Training program this fall. Tori is passionate about outdoor education and has a natural gift with children.

## COMMUNICATION

We send out occasional email updates. If you do not have email, please ask a parent if they can be your email buddy to alert you when there's an email & give you a copy. 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 the mentor. In the fall, that will be Tori Power at 802-236-9118. You can also try Bev at 479-1052. For emergencies or concerns please don't hesitate to contact Tori or Bev. If you need to contact a mentor during the school day, the best method is by text, but no guarantee we will check texts during class either. (P.S. Secret home# in emergencies: 829-3837 but we rarely answer it. Try Buzz's cell 481-2710).

## PARKING

WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND CARPOOLING! 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 DO NOT PARK ON THE SHARED DRIVEWAY. It's OK to park in front of garage! Use pullouts or back up whenever you see a car coming the other way. Go slowly, to respect neighbors and because it's sometimes it's tricky seeing a car coming around a corner or out of a driveway. Apples, grapes, prickly pears, blackberries & 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.

## WORKING FARM

Wildflowers is a working farm. We have gardens and chickens, and may have goats or sheep. There are inherent dangers at a farm including, but not limited to, shelters made of scrap lumber & chicken wire, fencing that ranges from scrap wire to electric wire to barbed wire, tractors, tools, fertilizers, etc. Farm kids get used to the life cycle of animals. They may witness births or deaths. They may find dead animals if we find gophers in the traps, or wild animal kills, or death by natural causes. We also have a nature museum of pelts & frozen animals we show a few times and they're allowed to touch them (they wash hands after). Kids also will know that when they aren't here we do sometimes kill our animals to eat them. Seeing where food comes from (both animal & plant) is so important. We'll touch on the benefits of eating food you know the origin of and eating meat that's raised humanely with love. If you're vegetarian, note that on Health form so we can verbally honor that with your child.

## EVENTS / COMMUNITY

An adult (parent, grandparent, etc.) is required to accompany child on any of the campouts, campfires, weekend field trips, and community work days that a child attends. Parents are not required to attend class meetings of course, nor class-day field trips. If we have enough parent drivers, we may add field trips. Families, including grandparents and siblings, are all welcome to attend community events such as our campfires, campouts, and community work days & potlucks. Please write the dates from our calendar onto yours. Most of our events are held jointly with our preschool families, scouts, and alumni, 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 is limited. Parents are requested to attend at least 2 out of the 5 community work days per year and help at 1 out of 3 events you attend, both to help create a flourishing environment for your child and to create a sense of community. If desired, ask Bev or Tori for alternative ways to help that you could do on your own schedule. Children, families, & staff all benefit when someone close to a child (parent, auntie, friend, etc.) comes to share skills, stories, foods, traditions, cultural information, music, hobbies, or careers. Grandparents are a great resource, bringing the elder in as a revered resource and honoring the wisdom that comes with experience. Offers to volunteer, whether during our class-time or not, are warmly welcomed!

## TOYS FROM HOME

To avoid conflicts and reduce desires, 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 can be donated or loaned to our "Nature Museum" here.

## FOOD

The kids should bring a healthy lunch & snack each day. Quite often, kids do not bring enough food. Alternately, don't be surprised if not much is eaten. The latter is often due to distraction and is most common in the early weeks. We are a "no-waste" school. Please pack without any waste in 100% re-usable containers. The kids occasionally are offered wild foods or garden foods we harvest or prepare. If you have any concerns, let us know.

## KNIVES

If a child 7 or older has had safety lessons from parents & has used their knife with parents on multiple occasions, demonstrating to parents that they know the basics of knife safety, and passes a safety test by the teacher, then either a knife with a secure sheath can be kept in backpack, or a pocket knife that locks when open is allowed in backpack or pocket or belt. Teachers can rescind this permission at any time. Child must ask permission of teacher every time knife is taken out. Other sharp objects are only allowed with permission & conversation between child, parents and teacher. We use knives to make primitive crafts such as burn spoons & bow drills.

## 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. One exception is occasional non-animated shows on animals because it's hard to imagine how animals move & live without seeing them.

## 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 millennia 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.

## ADMISSION PROCESS

Procedure to apply is: Mail application to PO Box 54, Graton, CA 95444 and/or email to [victoriakraft422@gmail.com](mailto:victoriakraft422@gmail.com). More communication is better than less, so I suggest a text to Tori 802-236-9118 to let us know you sent it. Spaces are given with priorities such as alumni, siblings or balancing the class (gender, age, etc.). We will choose from the applications to create a well-rounded class and inform parents of such decision by August 10. If space is available, we can admit students at any time. If program has begun, tuition can be pro-rated.

# **TUITION POLICIES**

## VALUE

We are not your average enrichment program. Nurturing community is a core value of our program and activities to support this are built in throughout the year. There are 4 festivals/celebrations, celebrating harvest, solstice, Gratitude, plus a campout at the end of the year. The cost of these events are covered in the fee for the entire family including siblings and grandparents. (*Note: parent (or assigned adult) must accompany child to all events.*) After your child attends a year of our program, you become “alumni” here, which makes you part of the “Wildflowers Family” forever, being invited to special events and having priority registration in all of our programs. If we add any field trips during their regular homeschool day, that will be at no cost. It’s possible we may do a backpack (additional cost) in the late spring. We have 4 ½ acres for kids to run, climb, and explore in, including forest, field, orchard, and gardens, and backing to a wetland. But most of all, we offer the chance for your child to be in a community of children that spend our days outside in a little tribe they bond with, just as their inner spirits call for since that’s the way humans lived for thousands of years.

## RATE OPTIONS

We are not offering a carpool rate for this coming homeschool year, to keep the general rate down. However, we still strongly encourage carpooling. A 10% discount can be applied for the 2nd child’s tuition when siblings enroll in the same semester.

## VENDOR PAYMENT FROM PATHWAYS, ETC.

We’re a vendor for Pathways Charter School and may sign up to be a vendor for other homeschools. *It’s the parent’s responsibility to ensure that the student qualifies before attending.* Payment or partial payment can be paid directly from that school. Pathways sometimes pays after attendance. To secure a spot in our program, a deposit is needed (see “Deposits” below). Once we receive Pathways money, we’ll refund any overpayment between what Pathways pays and our fee. If the difference is greater than their deposit, payment will be due from student’s family within 30 days of Pathways’ notification of such or child may not continue attending. Talk to Bev if you feel you need a different arrangement.

## LATE PICK-UP FEE

If parents pick up their child more than 10 minutes late without previous arrangement, they may be billed \$10 every 10 minutes they are late. If parents are late without previous arrangement more than 4 times in a school year, the provider has the option of terminating this contract.



## PAYMENTS & DEPOSIT

To reserve a space in the program, payment is due in full. We want to make our program more inclusive, though, so if you find that burdensome, please talk to Bev or Buzz about possible arrangement. If payment is made and then the family decides that the child will not be attending after all, refunds are as follows: 30 days before program begins, 75% will be refunded. Less than 30 days notice, if there is no waitlist, the payment becomes a non-refundable deposit that was paid to hold the space for the child. If the space can be filled within 10 days of said cancellation, then 50% of payment will be refunded. Sorry but we've had too many last minute cancellations after our waitlist finds other programs. We've had to cancel the entire program due to not enough students on a couple of occasions, greatly inconveniencing families & staff.

## SUBJECT TO

If not enough children are signed up for a particular session or if staffing here changes & we no longer offer that session or size of session, we reserve the right to cancel that session, with full refund for those who paid either session or year, or offer it at a higher rate if the families so choose. There are no refunds if we need to cancel an event due to bad weather or not enough sign-ups.

## WHAT TUITION COVERS

The fall semester is 11 weeks, September 11 to November 27. The spring semester is 15 weeks, from January 22 to May 21 (plus a campout on June 10-11). See attached calendar for holidays and breaks and for the events the fee includes. We take off "Gratitude Week" (Thanksgiving), "Snow Week" (All kids deserve snow!), Spring Break (remember: camping's the best nature connection opportunities!). The weekly class runs on Mondays from 9:30-2:30. Just ask if you have other scheduling needs. Private mentoring sessions are also available.

# **TUITION RATE**

<b>FIRST SEMESTER: 11 WKS of classes + Harvest Fest, Gratitude Feast, Solstice Fest for the whole family</b>	
Pay session in full by Aug 10:	\$645

<b>SECOND SEMESTER: 15 WKS of classes + end of year campout for whole family</b>	
Pay session in full by Aug 10:	\$875

**\*\* POLICIES & PROCEDURES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE \*\***