

**WILDFLOWERS
NATURE
SCHOOL**

PARENT HANDBOOK
Scouts program
2015-16

PROGRAM

PHILOSOPHY

Education has come so far from the original, innate way that humans learned for millennium. With extended family always around, kids used to observe, explore, question, and imitate their mentors in a natural setting. They learned by discovery, experimentation and keen awareness. This is why we call our teachers/leaders “Mentors”, hoping to rekindle that method of education. At Wildflowers Nature School, we try to allow the space for unfolding of inquisitiveness and exploration, for experiencing the wonder and spirit in special moments in nature. For in those moments lies the heart of education that lasts 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 building outdoor skills, & knowledge, appreciation, & therefore connection in 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 and family habits of nature connection (like camping), celebrating seasons, & noticing what goes on in the outside world, “Scouts” is a program 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 professional environmental educators trained in nature connection mentoring

WHEN & WHERE IS SCOUTS?

Scouts is from 3:30 to 5:15. Fall session consists of 6 club meetings (classes) & spring 5. At the moment, boys & girls will meet on the same days. It’s possible, if we have too many sign-ups, & we find a new mentor to help, we may move the boys group to the opposite Tuesdays. Fall session: 9/15 to 11/17, meeting on 1st, 3rd, & 5th Tuesdays. Spring session: 4/19 – 5/24, meeting every Tuesday except the 1st Tuesday in May. It will be at Wildflowers Nature School, on 4.5 acres of orchard, gardens, forest, creek, next to the Atascadero Valley in Sebastopol.

WHAT DO KIDS DO IN SCOUTS?

We’ll spend our afternoons doing a variety of outdoor activities, catered to the seasons and the children’s ages & interests. With some groups, the best service I can give is guided nature play. With others, crafts & skill-building will be what they’re most interested in. Some possible activities: sustainability & homesteading skills (food preservation, solar, etc), gardening, raising animals, tracking, creating habitats, team building, cordage, “stalking”, primitive skills & camp craft (fire, tents/ forts/ shelters, etc.), arts & crafts (nature art, native crafts, photography, weaving, etc.), “animal forms” (yoga-like imitations of animals), building with cob & willow, pioneering (making cool stuff with rope like tree swings), making traps, using knives, orienteering (compass, “lostproofing”, etc.),. Plus there are many school-wide events families can join in during the year (campouts, backpack, festivals celebrating the seasons, & more).

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

FOCI

The fall session will be more play-based than the spring session, which will be more based on primitive crafts. In the fall, we'll be blending spontaneity with guidance for children to gain the most from nature play. We'll also do some homesteading skills such as animal husbandry, harvesting, & food preservation (apple press, solar drying, pickles?), and hopefully some survival skills such as fire, water, & shelter. But we may just do a lot of forest games such as camo hide-n-seek. In the spring, we'll be focusing on primitive crafts such as making bows & arrows, baskets, water filters, grass mats, fire by friction kits, etc. If your child does not like to sit & do crafts, it's recommended that you only sign up for the fall. We encourage families that can get a week off of school & work to join us for a trip to the Buckeye Primitive Skills Gathering in the 1st week of May (google it). But we understand that can be problematic for kids to get that behind, so it's not expected.

AGES & GENDERS

This group is intended for ages 5-12, but is open to teen leaders as well. A multi-age group is one of the best elements that the nationwide scouting groups model. Older kids can be our "Patrol Leader" and experience the pride, solidification of skills, nurturing, patience, mentoring and leadership skills of being the oldest. Depending on sign-ups, the plan now is to separate scouts by gender. Girls and boys this age are very different and the comradery of separating genders is precious and hard to come by in today's programs. That being said, if we only have a few sign-ups, we'll combine until more kids register. If we get almost all of one gender, we reserve the right to cancel the group for the other gender (giving full refunds, of course).

MENTORS

Bev & Mark Buswell (aka Farmer Buzz), owners of Wildflowers Nature School & Earth Camp, will start out as the mentors. We've got our ears out for a perfect new male leader for the boys' group, so that could change. If there aren't enough sign-ups to split gender, Bev will be the mentor. We have the good fortune of having Audrey Pierik, an SSU intern working with us this fall. She was fabulous with the kids this summer at Earth Camp! She will probably take a group for an activity most weeks. Class is limited to 8 with one leader or 14 with two.

AFFILIATION/LICENSE

Wildflowers Nature Scouts is a program of Wildflowers Nature School, licensed with the state for caring for children as a "Large Family Childcare Home". This means that we had to jump through a lot of hoops to create a very safe and meaningful place for kids to play and learn in. The Scouts program is more of a "camp" type program, though. Our group is not affiliated with "Boy Scouts of America" or "Girl Scouts of America". We don't feel the term "scouts" is owned in any way by those organizations (ask Bev for more info).

CLOTHING

We spend all of our time outside EVERY DAY, rain or shine, freezing or blazing. It is imperative that you provide the proper clothing, so together we can be sure your child is protected from the elements. Remember that 5:15pm is almost always cooler than 3:30pm! Please either send your child with (wear or put in backpack): 1. In the winter, a real winter jacket*, hat & gloves. 2. If there's fog or chance of rain or it's rained that week, waterproof raincoat and rainpants. 3. From 1st rain until end of May, rubber boots. 4. If it's warm (or any day May thru Oct), shorts & short-sleeved shirt. Warning: we may be crawling on small trails through berry bushes or mud. Please see that tough clothing is either worn or in a backpack & always provide a full change of clothes in the pack. *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 ok when it's not too wet outside, but we may go to seasonal wetlands so send rubber boots, too. PLEASE LABEL EVERYTHING. Sebastopol Hardware, REI, & Lands End have rainpants. Second-hand stores and garage sales should have most everything else. If you're having trouble locating or affording any of these, do not hesitate to ask *before beginning scouts* for advice or possibly a loan. Please be advised that we do allow barefeet here. If you are not comfortable with that, please let us know.

BACKPACK / WHAT TO BRING

Each day your child should have in a daypack the following items: full quart water bottle that will not drip when on it's side, snack, small journal & pencil, and extra clothes (see above). Optional items in backpack: knife (see below), binoculars, camera, magnifying lens, bug box, an "emergency" snack. (It's expected your child will come fed).

KNIVES

If a child 7 or older 1) 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 2) 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 *child* is easily capable of locking & unlocking is allowed in backpack or pocket. Knives that fold without locks, like Swiss Army, are not permitted. Teachers can rescind this permission at any time. Child *must* ask permission of teacher *every time* knife is taken out. We use knives to make bow drills (fire making kits), native and primitive crafts.

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.

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 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 (including SUNSCREEN!), there is a state form to fill out. Please **DO NOT** give child medicine to bring to school (**even sunscreen, vitamins, cough drops, herbs & homeopathic meds**). If there have been contagious illnesses recently in your household, please inform us (flu, etc.).

TICKS

Of course, a school with a focus on nature is going to spend time in wild natural areas. Please check your child 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), see a Dr. versed in Lyme Disease as most family practitioners dismiss the realities of the disease.

FORMS

The following are the forms you need to return to us:

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

This is the 1st year we're also automatically including Medication Permission form in the registration pkt. IF you wish us to be able to administer any medication (including sunscreen), this must be signed. At our recent 1st Aid refresher course, we discussed that many of these kids have not had a bee sting before nor other things they might show severe allergy to. It would be a good idea in an extreme possibly life or death reaction to be able to give them a child's dose of Benadryl. We'll only administer what is expressly authorized by parents in the form. I suggest writing on that form "Children's Ibuprofen or Tylenol"; "Arnica" (homeopathic – calms most owies); "Benadryl"; & "sunscreen".

VACCINES - **NEW**

It's in question whether we, as a camp-type program, will be required to follow vaccination rules or not. For now, we are asking for parents to provide a copy of immunizations so that we

can fill out the state form commonly called "The Blue Card". This stays in our files (we don't send copies to state). If this is a problem, please talk to me. If you do not vaccinate your child per the official recommended schedule, the following info is important for you to know: On June 30, 2015, SB (state bill) 277 passed eliminating the "Personal Beliefs Exemption". It is now law that as of Jan. 2016, every child attending any learning institution must be vaccinated according to the official recommended schedule unless they either already have a Personal Beliefs Exemption on file ("grandfathered in") or have a medical exemption. For those who are on the fence about (or against) vaccinating, here are my recommendations:

1. Please look into the good hard science, not websites of personal stories, not a single 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 ignorance (as in ignoring) of real science in our culture lately goes contrary to an educated society. I know it's not easy to sort through all the conflicting studies on this difficult issue.
2. Talk to your well trained medical professional for their opinion.
3. If you decide you want to veer from the state recommendations, if you provide us with a Personal Beliefs Exemption (state form) before Jan.1, 2016, you're good to go. If it's after Jan. 1, we recommend you have a licensed physician 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"). I have some Dr. names if you want.

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 (petitions to get it on the ballot are circulating!!).

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. If anything major (such as divorce, death in the family, etc.), please try to contact Bev the day before scouts. 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.** Carpooling's strongly encouraged & financially rewarded (see tuition rates). 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 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 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. 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. Appropriate car seats are required by everyone driving a child that still legally requires it to or from school or any school event. I suggest that if you drive another child, that you carry with you info on parent & child & permission to authorize medical treatment in case of emergency.

DROP-OFF & PICK-UP PROCEDURE

Drop-off is at 3:30. Pickup is at 5:15. 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!

EVENTS / COMMUNITY

Campouts, especially, are an integral part of any true scouting experience. That’s how scouting began, on Brownsea Island, with Lord Baden Powell camping with a group of boys. Camping several times a year will connect your child to nature way more than we can in a program of 2 hr classes. Our events are also an integral part of being a community here. An adult (parent, grandparent, etc.) is **required to accompany child** on any of the events. Parents are not required to attend classes (“club meetings”) of course. Grandparents and siblings are also welcome to attend. Most of our events are held jointly with our homeschool & preschool families & alumni, joining in one Wildflowers community. Please remember it’s your responsibility (not staff’s) to watch your kids (or know who is) at events. The following events will most likely be offered: end-of-year on-site campout, spring off-site campout or a backpack, Harvest Festival, Solstice Celebration & Earth Day Festival. There are also opportunities to spend time on the land in community at our community work day/potlucks.

VOLUNTEERING

The contribution by kids to the totality of care needed for a flourishing garden and healthy nature trail are limited. Parents are encouraged to bring kids & attend the community work days, to help your child absorb the concept of stewardship, to create a flourishing environment for your child, and to create a sense of community. If you have a skill you could share with the kids, please offer!! Offers to volunteer, during our club-time or not, are warmly welcomed!

FOOD

Please be sure that your child has eaten something in the hour before arriving as they need a boost for that last chapter of fun in their day. In order to improve value, we now ask kids to come fed and not take time for food. If you are coming straight from school & need to arrive 10 minutes early to hang out with your child in the redwoods or schoolyard to snack, that’s fine. (But note that we scout leaders are not available until 3:30). Sometimes we may prepare a snack together from food we harvest or someone may bring a (non-sugar!!!) b’day snack to share. Please indicate on health form whether your child has any food restrictions.

WORKING FARM

Wildflowers is a working farm, complete with goats, chickens, & expansive gardens. 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 also get used to the life cycle of animals. They may witness births, but not (intentionally) deaths. However, they may find dead animals from time to time 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 couple of times. They also will know that when they aren't here we do sometimes kill our farm animals to eat them. Seeing where food comes from (both animal & plant) is so important. We'll touch on the benefits of 1) eating food you know the origin of, 2) supporting small local farms, 3) eating meat that's raised humanely with love. If you're vegetarian, note that on the Health form so we can verbally honor that w/child.

FOUND OBJECTS AT WILDFLOWERS

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.

ITEMS FROM HOME

To avoid conflicts, we ask that toys from home stay home. Children are welcome to bring in items that teach us something if they are just to show us & then put away (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 still 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. That being said, *occasional* non-animated shows on animals are good nature education, as they help see how animals move & live.

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 ahead. If a child is seen using any toy or electronic device here, we'll confiscate & return to you at pick-up.

ELECTRONIC WORLD VS. NATURAL WORLD

The greatest threat to returning our kids to the nature-based life children have had until recently 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 youth media addiction. There are great local speakers on this.

ADMISSION PROCESS

Procedure to apply is:

1. Mail application to **PO Box 54, Graton, CA 95444** or email it to bev@wildflowerkids.org by 6am Sept.6th.
2. Spaces are given with priorities such as alumni, siblings or balancing the class (gender, age, etc.). We will choose from the applications we receive to create a well-rounded class and inform parents of such decision between Sept. 7 -12. If you apply after that, admission will depend on whether there are any spaces. We may leave a spot or 2 for a particular demographic (age/gender/temperment) to get the right balance in the class & a potential friend for each child.
3. Once you are offered a spot, you'll have 7 days to pay for the session.

Sorry it's so tight, but in case we have more students than we can take, we need to outline our plan for admission now. In case we don't fill, we accept applications and students year-round and dues can be pro-rated.

RATES

VALUE

Unlike other scouting clubs, this is led by an experienced professional Nature Educator with a degree in Environmental Education. Most people carpool, so if you compare us to other programs, you should use the carpool rate, which is 20% less than the regular rate. You should also take into account our many events. Nurturing community is a core value of our program and activities to support this are built in throughout the year. Our events are offered at *far* less cost than the same type of event offered from Parks & Rec and many other organizations (campouts, possibly backpacking, Solstice Spiral, etc.). We are not your average enrichment program. We have 4 ½ acres for kids to run, climb, and explore in, including forest, field, orchard, and gardens, and backing to a wetland. Many children come to us for years, learning nature appreciation by bonding with a piece of land they've gotten to know so well, growing with the changes on the land. This is our land, so your kids will not be changing sites every couple of years. But I speak of it with the kids as THEIR land, as this is THEIR school we as a community are bonding with together. 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 have lived for thousands of years.

CARPOOL & SIBLING 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 "car pool" and both families receive *about* a 20% discount. Siblings in same program receive 20% off for the 2nd child (can't take carpool discount, too). 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.) If you need to choose a different carpool plan later, let me know & we can change it mid-season, with the associated adjustment.

WHAT RATE INCLUDES

Our "dues" is the fee for the session. The fall session consists of 6 Scout Meetings (classes) and the spring season consists of 5. Events are an additional cost. However, if anyone requests event costs to be included (for taxes or other child care reimbursement), we can arrange that. Being in Scouts, however, entitles your family participation in our many wonderful events. *All of the on-site events are free for preschool or homeschool alumni, in gratitude for the community and financial contributions the family has already given.* For our on-site events, we request a donation from families that have not done either our preschool or homeschool program. Our off-site campouts are charged a minimum for our time as a deposit for the space and then food and campsite costs will be divided amongst those who attend as well. The workdays are free, of course (with much gratitude from us ☺). One adult (parent, grandparent, etc.) is **required to accompany child** to any events child attends (not to scout meetings, though, of course). See below for estimated costs of events.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Please consider contributing to our scholarship program to help us offer our programs to a more diverse community. Sometimes, in the true spirit of community, a family comes to me confidentially offering to sponsor another particular family. There are many ways to help those less fortunate than us to experience nature connection. Because we want families to experience camping & backpacking, we charge alot less per hour for those, even though it covers a whole family (student, siblings, parents & grandparents). If the cost prohibits your family from joining us on any event, please call Bev. We would like all who wish to go to be able to. Usually there is a way we can blend partial scholarship and partial worktrade.

WORK TRADE

We may be able to arrange, for the 1st few people who ask, to do a work trade for a portion of the dues. We honor all human beings as being equally worthy of their time so trade is at a flat rate of \$15/hour regardless of task & experience. If the work is done before the start of the session, the worktrade record is turned in by the parent with the associated reduction in dues. If it's after the start, we can issue a refund.

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.

SUBJECT TO SIGN-UP & WEATHER

If not enough children are signed up at any given time, we reserve the right to cancel remaining time or event (with pro-rated refund) or offer it at a higher rate. If not enough of one gender sign up, we may cancel that gender's group (with pro-rated refund). Our events are weather-dependent. If you paid for an event & it's cancelled, we can issue a refund. We might reschedule, but we might not.

REFUNDS

Once dues are paid for the spot, your space is held. Dues are non-refundable. If together we create a custom payment schedule, please note that even if you've made only a partial payment, once you begin the session, you are making a commitment to the session and are responsible for the full amount by the due dates we set.

INSTALLMENT PLANS

Full dues should be paid by 1st scout mtg of each session. If you need a payment plan, let me know & we can work something out. If we do make a payment plan, any payments left unpaid will incur a cumulative late charge of 8% on the balance on the 10th of every month until it's paid. If installment is 10 days late, the student will not be allowed to return to Scouts until bill is paid. Anyone leaving an unpaid bill for 2 months can expect to be taken to small claims court. It's our hope that's unnecessary with early communication, creativity, & mutual respect.

SCOUT DUES

Fall 2015

FALL 2015	NO CARPOOL	CAR POOL 20% off!
FALL DUES	\$220	\$180

Spring 2015

SPRING 2015	NO CARPOOL	CAR POOL 20% off!
SPRING DUES	\$185	\$150

POLICIES & PROCEDURES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE