

**WILDFLOWERS
NATURE
SCHOOL**

PARENT HANDBOOK
Scouts program
2018-19

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, resourcefulness, 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, 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 on Tuesdays (not consecutive: see calendar) from 3:30 to 5:15. There are 5 meetings in the fall & 5 in spring. It will be held at Wildflowers Nature School, on 4.5 acres of orchard, gardens, forest, creek, backing 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 we 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.). There are also many school-wide events families can join in during the year. We are hoping to add a backpack May 18-19.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

DAYPACK / WHAT TO BRING

Each day your child should have in a daypack: 1) a full quart water bottle that will not drip when on it's side, 2) all clothing and boots listed below. Optional items in backpack: knife (see rules below), binoculars, camera, magnifying lens, bug box, an "emergency" snack, journal, pencil. (It's expected your child will come fed as we generally don't take time in our short meetings to eat.)

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 bare feet here. If you are not comfortable with that, please let us know.

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. Most of the time, we will divide the class by gender. It's important, and rare, for there to be opportunities to bond with just one's gender, celebrating who they are, and the comradery and focus that they have as one gender. Girls and boys this age are very different. 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 be the mentors. It is possible that could change, but more likely for a day. If there aren't enough sign-ups to split the group by gender, Bev will be the mentor for all. Class is limited to 7 with one mentor or 14 with two.

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.

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". The Scouts program is more of a "camp" type program, though. It's possible we may switch to operating as a "camp" with those associated regulations. Either way, we had to jump through a lot of hoops to create a very safe and meaningful place for kids to play and learn in. 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).

WORKING FARM

Wildflowers is a working farm, complete with chickens, expansive gardens & occasionally other farm animals. We also utilize the wild land behind us due to generosity of a neighbor. He does run cows there, though we'll try our best not to have cows out at same time & place as the kids. 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.

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">• Notification of Parents' Rights• Caregiver Background Check Process• Consumer Awareness Information
4. Wildflowers Health & Safety Form	
5. Immunization Record ("blue card")	9. Food Program Enrollment Form

There's 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 Arnica 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); "Benadryl"; "Bactine"; & "sunscreen". Please don't rely on us to apply sunscreen, though.

VACCINES

Note that some children here have exemptions to vaccines and are not protected. If your child is unvaccinated, note that the County Health Dept. can require that your children not attend here during an outbreak. This is a risk you take for not vaccinating and lack of attendance will NOT be reimbursed. 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 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, from what I understand, you'll need a 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").

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 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. You can sometimes network for one through Lyme Support Groups.

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. (Note: Mark's cell is 481-2710).

PARKING

PLEASE CARPOOL!!!!!! 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 info on that child & contact info on parent and 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

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. Families, including grandparents and siblings, are all welcome to attend community events such as our campfires, campouts, community work days & potlucks. Please write the dates from our calendar onto yours. It's possible we may add a backpack or off-site family campout in May, tentatively scheduled for May 20-21. Many of our events are held jointly with our preschool families, homeschool families, and alumni, joining in one Wildflowers community.

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!

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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.

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 permitted but not recommended. 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.

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

Enrollment priorities: 1. Scouts continuing from last year, 2. Scouts continuing after a break, 3. Alumni (including kids of staff & kids of previous programs I've led), 4. Siblings of kids in our other programs, 5. Alumni from camp, 6. New folks. Might need to change order to keep balance of age & gender in class. Procedure: Fill out attached application, mail in with \$10 application fee to: P.O. Box 54, Graton, CA 95444 or drop off at 10570 Mill Station Rd in tuition box to left of bulletin board by sign-in. On Sept.15th, I'll let everyone know who's in & who is on waitlist. If we don't have waitlist, yes you can join anytime & we'll pro-rate if we already started.

RATES & FINANCIAL POLICIES

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. This year, we are including most of our events that are on the calendar at no cost for the family, including siblings & grandparents. If we do a backpack (tentatively planned for May 19-20), that is the only thing there will be additional cost for & we'll offer it far below what most organizations charge. 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. 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.

RATE OPTIONS

We try to provide many options for ways to reduce the fee. We've increased the "pay the year up front" rate to a savings of about 15% over paying by the session. 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 10% discount. Siblings in the same program receive 10% 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.

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 3 times, 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, though many times we go forward in rain that's not steady or blustery. If you paid for an event & it's cancelled, we can issue a refund. We might reschedule (no refund), 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.

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. If the cost of either the program or, if we add a backpack or off-site family campout, prohibits your family from joining us, 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.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Full dues should be paid by 1st scout mtg. of each session. Please, if you need a payment plan, let me know & we can work something out. Don't just "forget" or keep putting us off, please. 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 2018

FALL 2018	NO CARPOOL	CAR POOL
FALL DUES	\$240	\$210

Spring 2019

SPRING 2019	NO CARPOOL	CAR POOL
SPRING DUES	\$260	\$225

2018- 2019

2018-19 paid by 9/18/18 (about 15% discount)	NO CARPOOL	CAR POOL
5 mtgs Fall & 5 mtgs Spring	\$425	\$383

POLICIES & PROCEDURES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Rev. 7/24/18