

# Exploring the Wonder of Nature!



*Celebrating*  
**BABIES AND TOTS**  
2012

VIRGINIA  
INFANT & TODDLER SPECIALIST  
NETWORK  
"Achieving Excellence in Early Care"

# Introduction

- Presenters
- Pre-Training Knowledge Measure
- Back Home Plan

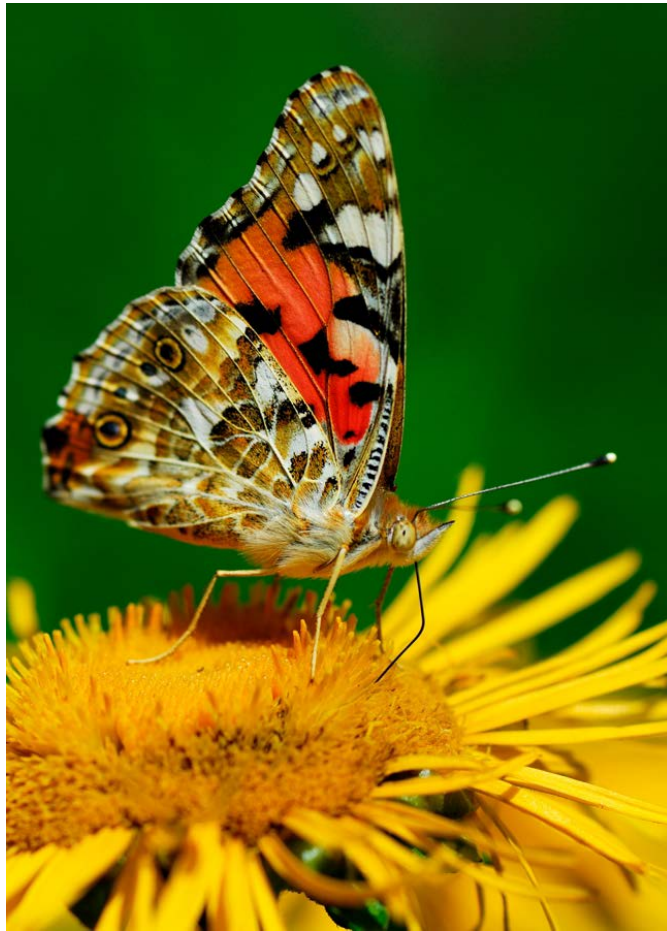


# Learning Objectives

- Describe how exploring nature with infants and toddlers can enhance learning and development
- Identify strategies for infusing nature and science into daily routines, activities, and play
- Create and facilitate nature exploration opportunities for infants and toddlers

# Nature is.....

All living and  
non-living  
things that  
were not  
created by  
man



# Benefits for Children

Infants and toddlers benefit from spending time outdoors in nature



# Introducing Children to Nature

- Daily experience in a natural outdoor setting is not always an option
- Indoor nature-rich environments can help children connect to and learn from nature



# The Value of Nature

- Improves awareness, reasoning, and observational skills
- Facilitates the development of new language and literacy skills
- Inspires wonder and discovery
- Enhances learning of math and science concepts



# Virginia's *Milestones of Child Development*

[http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/  
cc/professionalsresources.cgi](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/professionalsresources.cgi)





# Scientific Knowledge

18 months to 36 months

## **Indicators of Learning:**

- Observe and describe characteristics of living things, the weather, and the outdoor environment
- Use senses to observe and explore materials and natural phenomena

## **Examples:**

- Identify or attempt to name earth's materials (e.g., water, rocks, dirt, leaves).
- Look at flowers and point out details (e.g., the petals and stem).

# Math: Data Collection & Analysis

18 months to 36 months

## **Indicators of Learning:**

- Begin to explore physical properties of objects and identify their use
- Recognize objects as the same and different

## **Examples:**

- Explore common substances such as twigs, dirt, water
- Collect items that have common characteristics (e.g., shells, rocks, leaves)

# Facilitating Learning and Development

- Provide intentional opportunities for exploration and learning
- Connect aspects of activities to children's lives, experiences, learning



# Facilitating Learning and Development

- Facilitate thinking skills through problem-solving, questioning, and predicting
- Encourage active involvement in activities and routines



# Nature Rich Classrooms

- **Living things:** bugs, butterflies, fish, birds, plants, animals, pets
- **Books:** home-made photo books, realistic nature content and pictures
- **Toys:** puzzles with nature content; plastic fruits and vegetables; hand puppets; sensory tables with dirt, grass, water
- **Materials:** magnifying lenses; clear containers of grass or mulch; bird nests; large, smooth rocks; flowers; pine cones

# Nature Activities – Considerations

- Safety issues
- Age and development appropriateness
- Children's comfort level



# Creating Nature Activities

**Purpose:**

**Materials:**

**Activity/Experience:**

**Questions to ask:**

**Vocabulary words:**



# Creating Nature Activities

- Divide into five groups
  - Growing Things
  - Seasons
  - Rocks and Shells
  - On the Farm
  - Birds, Nests, Eggs
- Introduce yourself to one another
- Choose a recorder and reporter
- Work in your small group for 15 minutes





# Summary



# Resources

- [www.natureexplore.org](http://www.natureexplore.org)
- <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/professionalsresources.cgi>
- [www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org)
- [http://www.pbs.org/parents/exploring-science/backyard\\_or\\_park.html](http://www.pbs.org/parents/exploring-science/backyard_or_park.html)
- [www.childrenandnature.org/news/center](http://www.childrenandnature.org/news/center)
- <http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200801/BTJNatureMcHenry.pdf>

# Conclusion

- Back Home Plan
- Post-Training Knowledge Measure
- Evaluation



# THANK YOU!

For more information, contact us at:  
[www.va-itsnetwork.org](http://www.va-itsnetwork.org)



**This training was developed by the Virginia Infant & Toddler Specialist Network, a project of Child Development Resources.**

No part of this training or the materials may be modified, reproduced, or distributed without written permission.

For permission, contact  
Child Development Resources  
P.O. Box 280  
Norge, VA 23127-0280  
(757) 566-3300  
[www.cdr.org](http://www.cdr.org)

VIRGINIA  
INFANT & TODDLER SPECIALIST  
NETWORK

“Achieving Excellence in Early Care”



*A nonprofit agency changing the lives of babies, toddlers & their families*