



Precious Seeds Montessori House

Elementary Forest Element Program

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Elementary Forest Element Handbook

"Teaching children about the natural world should be seen as one of the most important events in their lives." ~ Thomas Berry, The Dream of the Earth

Precious Seeds Elementary Forest Element is modeled on the forest schools of Europe started back in the 1950's, this outdoor element brings elementary children to forest locations to hike, build, and play.

The goal of this program is to connect children to nature through play. We believe that an important part of childhood should be about exploring outdoors in an environment that supports child-led learning.

We hope you will consider adding this component to your child's education!

Holistic Education

At Precious Seeds we offer a holistic education program. Holistic education programs guide each person to find meaning and purpose through community connections, natural world connections, and humanitarian virtues. The aim of this type of education calls forth an intrinsic reverence for life and a passion for learning.

Our Mission and Goals

Precious Seeds mission is to emphasize both character development and intellectual development. The goal of our Forest Element is to provide an outdoor learning environment that allows each child to grow in respect to nature and other people. The child-led curriculum empowers children and provides them with the opportunity to connect to other people and the world in a caring way.

Our Guiding Principles

Children Come First

Developing a child-centred environment that fosters understanding and cherishes the uniqueness of each individual child and promotes his or her learning by remembering that:

- All children can learn;
- Children learn in different ways and at different rates;
- Learning needs to be relevant and responsive to individual needs and interests;
- Children learn best when they feel physically and emotionally safe;
- Learning should build upon children's successes;
- Education should be holistic, developing the interdependent facets of the child's mind, body and soul;
- Children's self-esteem and happiness are key to successful learning.

Spiritual Education

Virtues

Universally understood virtues are the building blocks of children's characters. All members of the Precious Seeds community are responsible for modeling and mirroring these by demonstrating personal integrity in both action and words; respecting each individual for the unique talents and gifts that he or she brings to our community; living and learning together joyfully; striving to include the widest range of people in the school community, regardless of culture, socio-economic status or ability.

See the Virtues Project for more information. <http://www.virtuesproject.com/>

Beliefs

- The children will be introduced to a developmentally appropriate concept of our Creator. We believe children instinctively know the truth about God and children can come to know about God's invisible qualities through creation and caring relationships.
- Children in our program will hear: God created our world, God loves and knows everyone, we can talk to God, and we find joy in caring for the world and others.
- We acknowledge and respect the diversity of belief systems of families in our program and welcome everyone. We invite you to discuss what your child hears at school in relation to your own belief system in an effort to cultivate tolerance. Our program is not intended to convert anyone and we do not study religious curriculum.

Location

We will meet for the forest element at Redwood Park at the playground. After our opening circle, we will walk to our site. Out of respect for the protected areas of the park, we will remain on-trail.

Redwood Park is our main location, but we will also visit other various locations depending on nature's events. These locations include Campbell Valley Park, Kwomais Point Park, Crescent Beach, White Rock Beach, and Ruth Johnson Park.

We will also visit a local farm once a month, most months of the school year, to help with farm-related activities, such as planting, feeding animals, collecting eggs, and simple animal husbandry tasks. We will notify you of Farm Weeks via emailed newsletter.

Features

- Environmental sustainability
- Child-led learning
- Experiential learning
- Holistic education
- Virtues Education
- Compassionate communication
- Low adult to child ratio (1:7 or better)

The Essence of the Forest Element

The Forest Element connects children with the natural world. Our facilitators are passionate about children and the natural world. We believe in engaging children's imagination, modeling a sense of awe for the natural world, and using experience as the basis for learning. Simple activities linked with unstructured play can teach many valuable skills like cooperation, communication, and leadership.

Time

Wednesdays from 9:30am-1:30pm

Forest School "Curriculum"

Math

- Recognizing patterns in the environment (leaves, spider webs...)
- Measuring natural materials using other natural materials
- Building items and measuring before you build (with materials on trail)
- Counting natural items

Music

- Creating musical instruments with natural materials
- Setting up items that will move in the breeze
- Listening to the sounds in your environment
- Singing and dancing together

Art

- Making land art with leaves, rocks, sticks
- Weaving with sticks
- Creating cordage
- Painting with natural materials
- Pounding flowers and leaves onto fabric
- Experimenting with natural dyes
- Creating “costumes” with natural materials

Literacy

- Creating a story about your place
- Finding letter shapes in natural materials
- Writing messages with natural materials.
- Local/First Nations stories about plants and animals
- Songs, rhymes and picture books about local plants and animals
- Circle stories with the group
- Using loose natural parts to tell an oral story
- Learning animal languages
- Sharing your personal stories about natural experiences
- Narration in play

Science

- Creating homes for real and imaginary animals
- Caring for animals and learning about their life cycles (Farm Portion)
- Understanding seasonal patterns

Sensory Play and Experiences

- Mud kitchen
- Playing with water on a tarp
- Sensory games such as "Sardines" and "Drummer in the Forest"

Large Motor Skills

- Throwing leaves and water into the air from a tarp
- Digging
- Walking on different surfaces, i.e. rock path, mud, grass
- Balancing on logs and rocks

Fine Motor Skills

- Whittling sticks
- Creating cordage
- Making baskets from leaves and other fallen materials
- Journaling - drawing or writing

Social

- Discussing where to go and what to do
- Talking about challenging situations and our comfort levels ("weapon" play)
- Making rules and setting limits as a group
- Problem-solving and working together on projects
- Hunting and gathering activities – searching for things together
- Integrating others into free-form, imaginary play

Reflection and Integration

- Looking for animal tracks and signs (on trail)
- Being deeply in an environment and getting to know its patterns
- Journaling or reflective art
- Sit spots for reflection

Farm "Curriculum"

We will visit Hazelmere Pumpkin Patch Farm once a month, most months of the school year, to help with farm-related activities, such as planting, feeding animals, collecting eggs, and simple animal husbandry tasks.

A Day in the Life of an Outdoor Learner

1. Sign in, check for appropriate clothing
2. Welcome circle, Welcome song, talk about the plans for the day, walk to site
3. Site assessment, play, facilitator facilitated activity, game (eg. "Mud Kitchen")
4. Wash hands, snack/lunch, story and tea time
5. Exploratory activity based on the interests of the group and whether we have something to continue exploring from the previous week (eg. nature hunt, painting with natural materials)
6. Hike back, quiet activities, Goodbye song
7. Sign out Pick up & departure

Roles and Responsibilities

Forest School facilitator's role:

- To ensure that all safety measures are in place and are followed.
- To treat each child with respect, care, and dignity.
- To ensure that the social, emotional, physical, and mental needs of each child are met.
- To engage in supportive and open communication with children and families.
- To encourage children to explore, create, ask questions, and imagine.
- To remain open to learning, growing, and sharing with others.
- To engage in self-care in order to be fully present each day.

Facilitators

Our Forest Element facilitators are certified BC Certified Teachers or Early Childhood Educators and have additional specialty forest training. Facilitators are thoroughly screened prior to their employment at Precious Seeds. They undergo an employment history check, criminal record check, health check, and multiple reference checks. Facilitators are all trained in Emergency First Aid and CPR.

Volunteers

To enhance the child to adult ratio, we encourage families to volunteer at least once per month during the program. The facilitator will have a volunteer calendar. Parents, grandparents, or other caregivers are welcome to act as volunteers in the program. Anyone who volunteers must submit a volunteer form and get a criminal record check.

We may also have local community member volunteers. We interview each community volunteer and ask each one to complete a criminal record check. We ask that community volunteers commit to attending for at least one season to provide consistency for the children.

Communication

Each month we email out a newsletter. This newsletter outlines the month's events, insights, and places we explored. It also gives a schedule of upcoming events.

Email is a good way to book an appointment to talk in person before or after the program.

The managing facilitator's email address will be given to you at the beginning of the program.

The program director can also be reached via email at any time. The Program Director is Christine Algard, christine@precious-seeds.com.

Sharing Skills, Knowledge and Passions

We would like to invite parents and community members to share their skills and knowledge with the children. If you have a particular skill that you would like to share, contact the facilitator to discuss this and to set up a time and date for you to come in and share this with the children.

FOREST ELEMENT POLICIES

Freedom and Discipline

As a school that emphasizes both character development and intellectual development, Precious Seeds expects students to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward the school and fellow students, parents, and teachers.

The goals are to establish a safe, warm and caring environment within which students learn positive and appropriate ways to handle situations; to develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility and courtesy; and to develop an atmosphere conducive to peaceful learning.

Our discipline approach is framed by the work of Dr. Gordon Neufeld and attachment theory. We aim to avoid behaviour issues from arising by following these strategies:

1. We use structure and ritual to impose order on behaviour. Ex. Our daily program has structure and routine built into it.
2. We accept responsibility for what is the best interest of the child and for keeping them out of trouble. Ex. We use previous experience to guide and avoid behaviour issues.
3. We always treat the child as if they want to be good for us. The desire to be good is a function of attachment.
4. We bridge all problem behaviour and resulting discipline. We emphasize that the relationship is maintained despite the behaviour. Ex. "I still care about you. What we need to talk about is how you hit your friend."
5. We attempt to connect before we direct. Ex. We make eye contact, smile, and/or nod.
6. We defuse counter will by hiding our agendas and by drawing attention to "meaningless" choices. Ex. To accomplish my agenda of putting a child to bed, I would give the choice of sleeping with teddy or puppy.
7. We script the behaviour of the children. Ex. "This is the way we hug our friend gently."
8. We don't overwork the incident and focus on maintaining the relationship.
9. We infuse FUN into the activity we wish to happen. Ex. "Let's pretend we are collecting treasures while we clean up these blocks."
10. We walk confrontations with futility all the way to sadness. We are there for comfort. Ex. While offering a hug after saying "no" to having another cookie I would say, "I see it makes you sad that you can't have another cookie, but we need to practice fairness and give one to each child. Can I give you a hug?"
11. We solicit good intentions to inculcate virtues, prime a sense of responsibility, and sow the seeds of self-control. Ex. "I see you were considerate when you tucked your shoes in so no one would trip on them."

Further, this approach is based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Neither corporal punishment, nor physical or emotional intimidation, is allowed at Precious Seeds. If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of their actions. For example, if

something is purposely broken, it must be replaced or repaired, preferably not by the parents alone, but by the students whose actions led to the damage.

Children are aware that hitting, pushing and other similar physical acts are not acceptable expressions of emotions. Children often display such behaviour out of frustration, nevertheless, the behaviour is not acceptable. When such acts occur, we help the child identify and come to terms with their own emotions that led them to display such behaviour; we encourage them to take reparative action towards the other child.

It is our desire to never have to dismiss a child from our program however, if the actions of a child are debilitating to the group environment and risk the health and safety of the child and or classmates we will dismiss the child. Please note that this will not occur until we have exhausted all reasonable resources to provide the proper environment for the child.

Trial Period

We have a one-month trial period prior to final enrollment. During this time the child is observed and assessed to ensure that he/she is able to adjust to the new environment and make new friends. For the well-being of the child in the event your child is not adjusting well to the new environment, we retain the right to terminate the enrollment. Parents also have the right to terminate enrollment during this trial period.

Health Policy

1. Health and Sickness

Child Care policies regarding health are based on the following criteria:

- Preventative public health practices,
- The comfort and safety of the sick child.
- The staff's ability to accommodate or look after a sick child.
- The protection of the other children, staff, students, and parents from communicable diseases.

It is recommended that all children have their regular immunizations up to date before they attend the centre. Check with your local health nurse. Please attach a photocopy of your child's immunization record to your registration form.

Children need reminders to decrease the risk of colds by:

- Washing hands often.
- Covering coughs and sneezes.
- Not sharing hand and face towels.
- Keeping hands away from nose and mouth.
- Not sharing food, drink, sucker etc. with someone who is sick.

2. Exclusion Due to Illness

- If your child has any communicable/infectious disease, please make other child care arrangements, and contact the centre within 24 hours of diagnosis.

- Should your child become ill while at school, you will be notified immediately and are expected to arrange for the child to be picked up promptly. Your child should be kept at home until symptoms subside.
- If the parent(s) cannot be located, staff will contact the Alternate Person listed on the Application Form.

To help limit the spread of germs, please keep your child at home if she or he is feverish, coughing a lot, has thick yellow or green discharge from the nose, or is otherwise obviously unwell. Specifically, please keep your child at home if they aren't well enough to take part in the regular program or is suffering from one or more of the following symptoms:

- * complains of unexplained or undiagnosed pain
- * an acute cold with fever, runny nose and eyes, coughing
- * sore throat or trouble swallowing
- * headache or stiff neck
- * severe itching of body and scalp
- * unexplained diarrhea or loose stool combined with nausea, vomiting or cramps
- * difficulty breathing, wheezing, persistent cough
- * fever (100F/38.3C or higher), general listlessness
- * infected skin or eyes, or an undiagnosed rash
- * Diarrhea, or nausea, or vomiting or abdominal cramps. These symptoms may indicate a bacterial or viral (gastrointestinal) infection, which is very easily passed from one child to another. The child should be kept home until all symptoms have stopped. (24 hours away from school)
- * any known or suspected communicable disease.

Should your child be diagnosed with a serious or contagious illness, please notify the school promptly.

If symptoms are the result of an allergy not infection, you should notify the staff and the child may attend regularly. A letter from the family doctor may be requested at this time.

3. Return to program after An Illness

- a. 24 hours after receiving an antibiotic
- b. When the child is no longer contagious.
- c. If a child is well enough to attend school, we feel they are well enough to participate in outdoor activities provided they are adequately dressed.

4. Administration of Medication

- All medications administered to a child in a licensed care facility must either be prescribed by a medical practitioner or provided by the parent for that child. The staff shall ensure that the medication is given to the child in the amount and at the time specified in writing by the parent. The teachers will provide you with an "Administration of Medication Form." The child's parent or guardian must sign these instructions. Staff will complete Caregiver Administration Record.
- Medication will be kept in locked cupboard out of children's reach.

5. Washroom

- We will not always be able to return to an indoor bathroom. Children must be comfortable using the bathroom outdoors.
- Please ensure that your child has a full change of clothing (i.e., pants, shirts, underwear, socks) and plastic bag in his or her backpack, just in case.
- Children are encouraged to wash their hands after going to the bathroom. We will provide a portable outdoor sink for washing.

Nutrition

- Please provide your child with a snack/lunch and water bottle.
- Please let us know of any allergies so that we can make the appropriate accommodations.
- We will wash our hands with soap and water in our portable outdoor sink before eating snack.
- We encourage healthy eating habits and we ask that you do not send sugary snacks.
- We will notify families of any food allergies that restrict what the children can bring.
- If you are unsure if a food is appropriate, please feel free to check with the teachers. Thank you for your cooperation!

Drop-off and Pick-up

If your child is going to be absent, please call our facilitator's phone line before 9 am. This number will be made available. This will allow us to begin the morning knowing how many children to expect. It is very important that parents are able to drop and pick up their children in a timely fashion. If you know you will be late to drop off or pick up your children please call our facilitator.

Precious Seeds Forest Element may not operate on occasion due to inclement weather, if we deem that the weather would be a hazard to families traveling to the program or children playing outdoors.

If the program is closed, the facilitators will call parents. Every effort will be made to email a notification of closure. If the local school district has a snow day, our program will not operate.

Precious Seeds Forest Element is closed during school district winter, spring, and summer breaks. Precious Seeds Montessori House runs summer camp programs during the summer months.

Releasing Students

When anyone other than the parent or guardian who normally takes your child home, arrives to pick up your child from class, the following procedure must be followed:

- The facilitator will check the student's Application Form to check the "Persons Authorized to Pick up My Child" section.
- If the facilitator has not met the individual previously, he or she may be asked to produce ID to verify identity.
- If the person is not on the list of "Persons Authorized to Pick up My Child" section, the facilitator must be given a signed letter (not email) from the parent stating who will be

picking up your child and the dates. It is not sufficient to say “the child’s grandfather”, we need to know the person’s full name for proper identification.

- If it is an emergency and it is not possible to get a written note to us in time, we need a phone call authorizing us to release your child, and again, we need the full name of the person we will be releasing your child to.
- If we have not received authorization of the individual picking up and they are not listed on your Application Form, we will try to contact you. If you cannot be reached, we will not release your child until we hear from you.
- If anyone who is a “Person Not Permitted Access to my Child” on your child’s Application Form comes to pick up, we will not release your child to that individual.
- In cases of divided families and custody issues, a copy of all pertinent court orders pertaining to your child must be in your child’s file at school.
- Children will not be released to anyone who appears intoxicated.

Emergency Procedures

THIS PLAN IS PRACTICED, REFINED, AND REHEARSED REGULARLY WITH THE CHILDREN THROUGH DISCUSSION, ACTION, AND DRILLS. THE LOCATION OF THE DESIGNATED SAFETY SPOTS WILL BE REINFORCED.

Facilitators are trained in the following emergency procedures. Facilitators are knowledgeable about location and use of emergency supplies.

At the first sign of an emergency, children are taught to stop whatever they are doing and calmly, quietly and quickly, without regard for collecting personal items, take action:

- **EARTHQUAKE:** DUCK, COVER, HOLD. Take cover by a sturdy tree, protecting and covering head and face and listening for instructions from the facilitator, emergency staff, or responsible adult. After shaking stops, go to the Designated Safety Spot.
- **FIRE** or other danger: proceeding immediately to the Designated Safety Spot; sit down and wait, no matter how long it takes for help and instruction from the facilitator or emergency officials or other emergency staff.

Our **Designated Safety Spot** will be the meeting spot where we keep our backpacks and gear.

The facilitators will immediately gather the children and proceed to the Designated Safety Spot. The second facilitator or volunteer will ensure all children are following the first facilitator and meet the group at the Designated Safety Spot. Attendance will be taken immediately with whatever necessary actions are appropriate for safety and support of all the children.

In full cooperation with emergency workers and strategies, every effort will be made to keep your children safe. Families will be contacted as quickly as possible and as permitted.

Out of Town Contact: Kath Wills 1-250-675-5452. In the event of an emergency where local calls don’t connect, we will communicate with you through this third party.

Additional Notes:

- Students will be dismissed ONLY to a parent or guardian or Authorized Person listed on your Child's Application Form. All parents or designated guardians who come for students must sign them out.
- We are prepared to care for children in the event of a critical situation if parents are not able to reach the school. The teachers have first aid training and will be in communication with local emergency services. In addition, the school has Emergency Supplies on hand.

Child Support Policy

The Precious Seeds Forest Element strives to provide social, emotional, and physical support for all children who participate in the program. Whether your child has designated special needs or simply has a need for extra support, we would like to work with you to determine how to best care for your child.

If we find that an individual child's need for support is greater than the facilitators can provide, we will work with you to look at additional care for your child. Some options may include: You can hire someone who will support your child every day that he or she attends. You can attend yourself, or designate a friend or family member to attend. Anyone hired or volunteering to support a child must submit a criminal record check.

Disclosure of Special Needs

Volunteers are an important part of the Forest Element. It is important to provide volunteers with the information they need to best support your child and the other children who participate in the program.

At the beginning of the year, our facilitator will meet with you to write a short statement that outlines how best to work with your child. This statement will be communicated verbally to the program volunteers. Ongoing discussion with parents is very important to us. Feel free to connect with our facilitator if you have any questions about your child's participation in the program.

If our facilitator has questions about your child's behavior and needs for support, he or she will contact you as well. For confidentiality, we ask that discussions of any child's behavior be addressed to the program facilitator.

Children's Safety

Every child who participates in Precious Seeds Forest Element must be physically able to take part in program activities or have a support person who is capable of helping them participate. All children must be able to respond to a request to stop. This is important in the forest where the environment is dynamic. If you think that this might be a challenge for your child, please contact us to discuss your child's needs before you register for the program.

Transitions and Separation

We understand that children who are new to a program need some time to transition. Parents are welcome to stay with their children if required.

Bringing Siblings

Siblings are welcome at circle time, but due to insurance limitations they may not accompany us on our other adventures. Please find alternate care for siblings when you are volunteering. Babies in arms who can stay in a front or backpack for the duration of the program may attend with a volunteering parent.

Physical Play

Part of the joy of being outdoors is having the opportunity to engage in physical play. This may include building, sitting, and playing together in imaginary play. We encourage children to engage in pretend play in nature. Our policy is to talk about this play with the children and discuss as a group how we can play in a way so that everyone feels comfortable.

Branded Clothing

Please avoid sending your child in clothing that has characters on it so that the clothing does not influence the children's play.

Toys

Personal toys are best kept at home. We suggest that you have a basket in the car where the child leaves the toys until the school is over.

If your child wants to share an educational item, please ask the facilitator(s) if you can show it off at circle time. After this, the item can go home with parents.

Warmth and Comfort

When you are outdoors, comfort is **very important**. Good clothing makes the difference between a child who is engaged with the environment and a child who is uncomfortable and unhappy. When it is rainy, please send your child in layers.

The children must come with gear that is appropriate to the weather that day. Children who are not adequately dressed will not be able to attend that day.

Layers: We recommend wearing layers of clothing so children can make adjustments as needed according to changes in weather/microclimate and activity levels.

Footwear: Boots or sturdy waterproof shoes with good grips on the bottom. Even when it is not raining, the children may play in water or mud. Footwear should be closed-toed (no sandals).

When it is rainy, we recommend:

- Inner layer of fleece (or polypropylene) or natural fabrics such as wool or silk. The fabric should wick moisture away from the skin and provide a warm, breathable layer.
- Middle layer of insulation made of wool or fleece.
- Outer shell of waterproof, windproof clothing, including a rain jacket and rain pants.
- For the feet, we recommend neoprene Bogs or Kamik boots.
- Warm, waterproof hat that covers the ears.

When it is cold, please add:

- Warm and waterproof gloves or mittens that slip on and off easily.
- Long underwear.
- An extra pair of warm gloves and warm socks in your child's bag
- Reusable hand warmers

When it is warm, please wear:

- A long-sleeved shirt (we recommend light cotton, silk or hemp).
- Durable pants.
- A sun hat.
- Sun protection

Everyone requires:

- A whistle, attached to the child's jacket or backpack.
- A child-sized waterproof backpack should contain:
 - a. A healthy, high-energy snack in a reusable container. Limit garbage please.
 - b. A small unbreakable cup for warm drinks.
 - c. An emergency blanket.
 - d. Extra socks, gloves, and hat.
 - e. Bread bags for wet feet (if their feet get wet we can put on dry socks, put feet in bags, and back in wet boots). The child's backpack should have your phone number on a tag.
 - f. A full change of clothing (i.e., pants, shirts, underwear, socks) and plastic bag for soiled clothes.
 - g. Anything that the facilitator has asked you to bring that day.
 - h. Optional: reusable hand warmers.

The facilitator will assess whether children are dressed appropriately when they are dropped off.

Forest Element Safety Guide

Safety Ethic

In the forest, one of the roles of the facilitator or volunteers is to ensure that all safety measures are in place and are followed daily. We work to create an environment that is as safe as possible by being proactive and by using sensible, simple guidelines that the children and adults can remember. Our safety principles include:

- Constantly assess risk as conditions change (dynamic risk assessment).
- Set up a safe space with boundaries and safety guidelines.
- Observe the children's interactions with each other and with nature.
- Spot the children during more challenging physical activity.
- Gently guide the children to safer activities if required. If we feel that the children's play is becoming dangerous, we will redirect the children and remind them that it is important to stay safe outdoors.

Site Risk Assessment

If the site as a whole is deemed too risky due to high winds or weather such as a thunderstorm, the facilitator will call all families to let them know that the program is cancelled for the day or relocated indoors at Precious Seeds Montessori House.

If the program must be cancelled and families are already on their way, the facilitator will go to the location to meet families and let them know that the program is cancelled. Every effort will be made to post a notification of closure on the front page of the website.

If the Surrey School District has a snow day, Precious Seeds Montessori House will not operate. In case of early dismissal due to unsafe conditions, we will attempt to contact each child's parent or caregiver. If we cannot contact a parent or caregiver, we will contact the next person listed on the family's emergency contact list.

The Role of the Adult

All of the adults present each day have a role to play in ensuring the safety of the children. Before the day's program begins, the facilitator will talk with the adult volunteers to inform them about the plans for the day. At the beginning of each session, the facilitator will introduce the adults who are volunteering for the day. At some points in the day, the adult's role will be to engage with the children as they pursue a particular activity. At other points in the day, the adult's role will be to observe the children's play to ensure that it is safe.

Head Counting

Each adult is responsible for head counting. Counting heads takes place every 10 minutes when the group is in one area. Each time the group transitions from one place to another, heads are counted again.

Interactions Between Children

The children will participate in adult-led and child-led activities and will also have time for free play. Sometimes children will have interactions between them that are challenging for both the children involved and for the adults around them. If conflict resolution seems necessary, an adult

may step in to mediate. Discipline methods used by facilitators and volunteers will focus on gentle discipline. Please see Discipline Policy for details. Adults will make every effort to do the following when challenging interactions occur:

- Be proactive. Take note of the social interactions between the children.
- Be physically close to a child or children if concerned about a social or safety situation.
- Remind the children to use gentle (kind, respectful) words to ask for what they need.
- Remind the children that hands are for working and playing, not hitting.
- Redirect the children to different activities or have them chat with an adult who will help them calm down.
- When the children are calm, discuss the situation with the children involved. Encourage discussion of any differences so that the children can work on communicating their needs to each other.
- Acknowledge children's feelings and encourage them to express their feelings about a situation (i.e. "I felt sad when...", help them to identify/ name feelings if needed).
- Encourage the child(ren) to consider alternative actions that they could take in the future. If you are in doubt about what to do in a certain situation, please alert the facilitator.

Interactions Between Children and Animals

The children may interact with animals in the forest. To ensure that the environment is safe for the children and the animals, the children should:

- Always approach an animal from the front.
- Only feed and touch the animals when the facilitator says it is appropriate.
- Use gentle hands to touch animals.
- Return small animals (invertebrates) to their homes after observing them.
- Wash their hands after touching animals or after gardening.

The Children in the Forest

Once we get to our play site for the day we will be doing a site risk assessment to make sure the site is safe to play. We will be looking at the canopy layer, the shrub layer, the field layer and the ground layers of the forest. If the risks are too high then we will move to a different location.

The following guidelines (in italics) are written with phrases that you can use with the children as you guide them toward safe behavior in the forest.

Hiking

When we walk through the forest, we are in a sandwich. Our facilitator will be in the front and a volunteer will be in the back. The children do not need to be in a line, but they do need to be inside the sandwich.

Boundaries

If needed, boundaries will be established. Each adult will watch to ensure that the children do not move beyond the boundaries. An adult will remain in close proximity to the children at all times. If we are working in groups in different areas, there will be one adult per group.

Sticks

Stick for play will be the length of the child's arm or shorter except at the facilitator's discretion. *Sticks are for building, digging, and imaginative play. They are not for hitting. When we walk*

and run, we put the sticks down. It is important to be able to use your own hands for holding and for balance.

Rocks

When we are near the water, we may throw rocks. When we throw rocks, we look around and check to make sure that no one is close to us, in our personal bubble (the area a few meters around our body). We may throw rocks that are as large as the palms of our hands.

Climbing

We may climb as high as we are tall. We only climb as high as we can climb on our own. We only climb when an adult can safely spot us (watch us and keep us safe). The adult will be present to spot a child, not to assist them to get higher. If the adult cannot be present or cannot safely spot the child, the child will not be able to climb that high.

Digging

Ask the facilitator if you would like to dig a hole that is larger than your hand. When we dig a hole, we will fill it back in when we are finished so that we disturb the forest as little as possible.

Plants

We ask an adult before eating a plant to make sure it is the right kind. We keep green leaves on the plants so that they can help the plant grow.

Water

We will primarily access shallow, slow-moving water bodies such as ponds and side channels. Before we visit a body of water, the facilitator will give instructions to the children about the appropriate behavior around this water body. Children must be within an arm's length of an adult and may not stand in the water without permission from the facilitator.

Animal Encounters

Dogs

It is very possible that the group may encounter dogs (leashed or unleashed) while in the forest. While dogs are supposed to be "under control" even if off leash, some dogs are more excitable or aggressive than others. Games and discussions to stay safe around dogs will be practiced each month. To help prevent children from being bitten by dogs, the following safety tips will be reviewed regularly:

- Do not approach an unfamiliar dog.
- Do not run from a dog or scream.
- Remain motionless (e.g., "be still like a tree") when approached by an unfamiliar dog.
- If knocked over by a dog, roll into a ball and lie still (e.g., "be still like a log").
- Do not play with a dog unless supervised by an adult.
- Immediately report stray dogs or dogs displaying unusual behavior to an adult.
- Avoid direct eye contact with a dog.
- Do not disturb a dog that is sleeping, eating, or caring for puppies.
- Do not pet a dog without allowing it to see and sniff you first (and without getting permission from the dog's guardian).

Coyotes

If a coyote appears and acts unafraid or aggressive, we will take the following action as soon as we notice the animal:

- Do not allow the coyote to approach any closer than 100 metres.
- Raise your arms and wave them in the air to make yourself appear larger.
- When in a group, act in unison to send a clear message to the coyotes they are not welcome.
- Back away slowly, do not turn your back on the coyote.
- Make noise, throw sticks, rocks and sand at the coyote. We will also remind children of the importance of staying with the group to help avoid these encounters.

Wasp

If a wasp lands on you wait for it to fly off or brush gently off with a mitten (do not brush it with your hand). If you are faced with a wasp don't challenge it - it is far better for you to leave the area until the wasp has gone. Do not run or thrash or swat. If there is only one wasp, then keep still and, when safe, move to shade or away from what is attracting the wasp. If stinging seems inevitable, then cover your face with hands or clothing or get face-down on the ground. If there are multiple wasps then your removal to safety is urgent. If you find what appears to be an old and seemingly inactive wasp nest do not disturb it, there may still be living wasps inside.

Medical Emergencies

Minor emergency

If a child falls and gets a cut, the facilitator does first aid while the volunteer observes the group. If a child gets a bump, scratch, or bruise, we will let the parent (or other pickup person) know at the end of the session.

Minor emergency requiring parents to be called

If a child is ill, the lead facilitator does first aid as required. The other facilitator manages the group. The lead facilitator calls the parent or other emergency contacts. The group arranges to meet the parent in the drop-off and pick-up location. After that, the group will continue with the day's program.

Emergency requiring external medical care

In a serious emergency, one facilitator does first aid while the other facilitator calls 911. One of the facilitators manages the group. The facilitator will arrange with emergency staff what procedures work best for the transfer to medical care.

Thank you for reading the Precious Seeds Forest Element Handbook. If you require any further information, please contact us at info@precious-seeds.com.