

Learn About Nurturing the Natural World

Having just returned from a hiatus in coastal Georgia, I was reminded of the beauty of the natural world.

At a time when media and the world are filled with violence and technology can feel all encompassing, what a gift the natural provides us. In fact, I believe connecting with the natural world provides humans the opportunity to find needed solutions in today's world.

Nature rejuvenates. Nature solicits self-reflection. Nature invites exploration and a sense of peace.

I have spent the past decade dedicated to providing youth opportunities to explore the natural world, through outdoor curriculum and engagement in social and civic projects to better the community.

Natural curiosity, the sense of empowerment, community investment, self-knowledge, critical thinking, leadership and problem solving are but a few of the attributes I witness young learners who have regular doses of nature education share in common. There is a great body of evidence to support that exposure to nature brings improved psychological and physical health and improved human relationships. By bringing nature into our lives, we invite humility.

Richard Louv of Children and Nature Network, author of Last Child in the Woods and Vitamin N Challenge shares:

The more high-tech our lives become, the more nature we need.

Humans are hard-wired to love and need exposure to the natural world.

We suffer when we withdraw from nature.

Nature brings our senses alive.

Individuals and businesses can become nature smart.

Nature heals.

Nature can reduce depression and improve psychological well-being.

Nature builds community bonds.

Nature bonds families and friends.

The natural world's benefits to our cognition and health will be irrelevant if we continue to destroy nature.

Hall County is blessed to have a network of educators, Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists and concerned citizens who are actively working to make the world a better place. Join us as internationally recognized nature educators inform, inspire and instruct anyone who impacts the life of a child.

On Sept. 9 and 10, parents, grandparents, teachers, church and Scout leaders are invited to attend the Nurturing the Natural/Growing Gardeners: A children's gardening conference at Gardens On Green and First Baptist Church in Gainesville.

The keynote speaker is Robin Moore from North Carolina State. Other presenters will be Jane Taylor on the topic of children's gardening and Betsy Williams on the topic of fairy houses. Five break-out sessions with hands-on ideas such as Art In The Garden, Fairy Dust, A Walk in the Woods, and Gardening For Butterflies and Other Pollinators follow. Register early to receive your first choice in sessions.

Registration before September 2 costs \$75 for both days, \$50 Friday or \$25 Saturday. Conference registration forms may be obtained at the Hall County Extension Office, 734 E. Crescent Drive, in Gainesville; or contact Mindy Wade at wademelinda@bellsouth.net or call 770-967-0983. Mail forms to: Melinda Wade, 5186 Glen Forest Drive, Flowery Branch, Ga., 30542

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