

# Family, *nature* and COVID-19

*A free online guide to support families  
during the COVID-19 pandemic*



# Our season will change

*As the seasons  
changed,  
the apricot tree  
shed her leaves,  
as she prepared for  
the long winter ahead.  
It rained,  
it poured.  
And it was ever  
so cold.*



*But soon enough,  
the warm sunshine  
greeted her;  
the seasons  
were changing  
again.*

*As they always do.*

*Her blossoms  
began to sing  
with a sweet  
scent of hope.*



*And soon her leaves  
will sprout,  
and there  
will be fruit.*

*Our season will change.*

JASON TYNDALL



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## Acknowledgement of country

Nature Play SA acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Land on which we work and play. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and extend our respect to all Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia



# Foreword

Australia - The lucky country, and that popular saying is coming into its own as our nation battles COVID-19. Given our geographical distancing from the rest of the world, we are well positioned to manage this pandemic and I am confident we will.

It's fair to say that no one could have ever predicted the enormity and the subsequent ripple effect of COVID-19.

We're living in unprecedented times. Parks and playgrounds are closed, offices are shut, streets are increasingly empty, and some people are locking themselves away. The uncertainty that we are grappling with is challenging for us all, but more than ever it is essential to stay positive.

We need to take the notion of this pandemic and the sudden unpredictability of life and turn it on its head by keeping a positive and healthy mind and body. We must live the best life we can during this time and connecting with nature is pivotal.

When it comes to our children's experience through COVID-19 – we can strongly influence what it looks and feels like. We can reframe the challenges into opportunities and view our isolation as enriched connectedness.

The pages that follow offer the most comprehensive listing, information and activities to help keep our mental health, physical health and wellbeing in check using nature for inspiration.

It's essential we make our families and communities more resilient by incorporating nature into our daily lives.

Most of us acknowledge that we have to work hard at 'flattening the curve'. We get the need to protect others who may be more at risk than ourselves. But the landscape can be confusing, and we hope this guide will allow you to navigate what activities your family can participate in - there are over 200!

As we adapt our lives to deal with COVID-19, our key focus is to provide families with practical ideas, resources and new opportunities to play and learn and nature is key, as we adopt social distancing and increase time together as family units.

It's important to remember that COVID-19 and its challenges won't last forever, even if it feels like it sometimes. We need to remind ourselves, like all things, this will pass and, in the meantime, engaging with nature will help ensure our families and communities stay strong.



*Dr Justin Coulson*

*Dr Justin Coulson is one of Australia's leading experts in the areas of parenting, relationships and wellbeing. Connection is at the core of what Justin does and he is passionate about helping others to transform their relationships, and their lives, for the better.*

Find Justin online: [Instagram](#) // [Facebook](#) // [happyfamilies.com.au](http://happyfamilies.com.au)

# We are in this *together*

What a place we find ourselves in.

Right now – we need each other. Our family, our friends, and the strength within ourselves. Day-by-day, things change, and we watch with unease and anticipation. The best thing we can do is follow our [National](#) and [State](#) Government's advice and of course our instinct as parents and individuals to protect ourselves, loved ones and our community.

As a not-for-profit organisation [Nature Play SA](#) has widely become known for our family events, nature-based resources, education programs in schools and early years, and our advocacy for a childhood where nature is not forgotten. Whilst we were on track for a big 2020 – like everyone in the country and the rest of the world – our lives both professionally and personally are faced with strong uncertainty – and we are fighting to keep our organisation alive. But amongst all of this we need to find composure, clarity and strength for our families, communities, and ourselves. Whatever ensues we will continue to do everything in our power to support families to find hope, joy and build positive memories.

Our organisation's immediate priorities have shifted to focus on supporting families through the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of us in the community are confronted with self-isolation or following strict social distancing guidelines – and whilst this may seem daunting at first, if we shift our perspective from *being isolated* to *being together with our family* then our days can contain joy, creativity and a collection of little moments that we'll look back on and in a positive light.

This guide is for families everywhere. Whether you are social distancing or self-isolating there are opportunities that can help fill the days with some magic. And if you're looking at ways to support your mental health and wellbeing, many nature-inspired methods are shared which can form part of an integrated approach to strengthening your overall wellbeing. But also remember, there is support available if you or any of your family members or friends are struggling (such as [Lifeline](#) 13 11 14 and [Beyond Blue](#) 1300 22 4636).

As you flick through these pages, we hope you feel a level of comfort and maybe relief that there are things we can do as a family that not only distract our minds but bring us closer during COVID-19. And as things change, the content in this guide will provide support as we gain the freedom and confidence to seek adventure once again.

It won't be easy, but we are all in this together.

Take care and stay well,  
*The Nature Play SA team*



Whilst every effort has been made to provide safe and family-friendly activities and sources of information, Government [COVID-19](#) advice continues to change and there is variation in advice across jurisdictions. Please keep updated at [SA Health](#) and the [Australian Government Department of Health](#) (or your relevant [state or territory](#)) particularly about [social distancing](#) and [self-isolation](#).

[www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au)

Australian Government 'stay informed on coronavirus' App

[Other states and territories](#)

*Note: A [collection of credible Australian Government resources](#) for the general public and industry about coronavirus is a good place to get accurate facts on the virus.*

**If you suspect your child or family may have COVID-19, call the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398 (24 hours, 7 days). For symptoms and what to do based on your circumstance see [SA Health's COVID-19 flow chart](#).**



## **SECTION ONE:** Nurturing your mental health and wellbeing during COVID-19

There is no doubt that every Australian in one way or another is affected by [COVID-19](#). And with social distancing, financial strain, physical health concerns, and dramatic shifts in daily life, our mental health may be in state of vulnerability.

There are many supporting organisations and resources available to provide guidance and support to individuals and families. One of Australia's leading mental health organisations [Beyond Blue](#), have provided advice on 'looking after mental health during the coronavirus outbreak'. Their tips are summarised below:

**Find a balance with media coverage:** Find a healthy balance and limit news and social media particularly if it is impacting your family.


**Ensure you have credible information:** Accessing information from credible sources can make sure you are getting succinct and accurate updates and advice from government and health authorities (i.e. SA Health, Australian Government and World Health Organisation).

**Find ways to help you calm:** Do your best to stay calm: know that you are following Government Guidelines and doing the right thing with hygiene measures and social distancing. Mindfulness can be an effective method and Smiling Mind have released some tools '[supporting yourself and each other through coronavirus](#)'.

**Maintain perspective:** Remind yourself that should you or your family be in isolation it is temporary that your efforts are helping others in the community stay safe. Remember that scientific and medical experts around the world are working hard to help control the outbreak. Also keep in mind that assumptions can impact your perspective – we are all in this together.

**Stay connected:** There are several ways to stay connected with friends and family such as video conferencing apps like Zoom, Skype as well as Facetime, text messaging and even letters. If you need to connect for support you can access [Beyond Blue's services](#).

**Look after your health:** Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Keep regular sleep routines and eat healthy foods. Try to maintain physical activity. Establish routines as best possible and try to view this period as a new experience that can bring health benefits.



# Resources for supporting children and young people through COVID-19

Children's mental health is vulnerable to global crises such as pandemics, particularly through exposure to media and the conversations of others. Below are some resources to assist children through [COVID-19](#).

- [Information for parents, carers and children about COVID-19](#) including: [how to talk to children about the outbreak](#); [frequently asked questions for older children](#); mental health information; and [Wash, Wipe, Cover and Stop the Spread resources](#), SA Health
- Free community-based mental health service - [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service \(CAMHS\)](#), Women's & Children's Hospital
- ['Helpful website and Apps for Young People'](#), SA Health's Women's and Children's Health Network
- Advice and resources for [children and young adults for dealing anxiety](#) around Coronavirus, KidsHelpline
- Short tips on supporting children [Helping Children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak](#), World Health Organisation
- A short Youtube video [Talking to kids about scary stuff in the news](#), Beyond Blue
- [Online book for children – Hi. This is Coronavirus](#), SA Health
- Videos and other [age-specific information for supporting children through Coronavirus](#), Department for Education
- A blog post with practical ideas about [helping children with their anxiety through COVID-19](#) by Dr Justin Coulson, Happy Families
- Tips for living and communicating with children [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and children in Australia](#), Raising Children Network, Australia
- Advice and tips for [talking to children and young people about COVID-19](#), Australian Red Cross
- Tips for [Supporting families through COVID-19](#), Child Mind Institute
- [Tips for staying connected with our children through COVID-19](#), Australian Childhood Foundation
- [How mindfulness can help during Coronavirus](#) – a blog by Smiling Mind
- A resource for [Supporting children and young people experiencing anxiety](#), Be You
- A resource for [Supporting early learning communities through Coronavirus](#), Be You
- Resources for [supporting children during Coronavirus](#), Emerging Minds
- Online book [#COVIBOOK](#) by Manuela Molina to reassure children under the age of 7 about COVID-19 (available in over 20 languages)
- [Advice and resources for helping teens cope with COVID-19](#), ReachOut
- [Parenting SA website](#) which contains [Parent Easy Guides](#) such as:
  - [Dealing with a crisis](#)
  - [Coping skills \(Resilience\)](#)
  - [Positive approaches to guiding children's behaviour](#)
  - [Living with young people \(teenagers\)](#).





## Resources for supporting a child who has a diagnosis of Autism

This is a challenging time for so many people. The uncertainty is a significant source of anxiety, particularly with children with a disability such as Autism:

- A coronavirus [Social Story](#), Little Puddins Educator
- [Autism and Coronavirus: The essentials](#), Autism Awareness Australia
- [An explanation of what Coronavirus is](#), The Growing Space
- 7 support strategies for [Supporting Individuals with Autism through Uncertain Times](#), Autism Focused Intervention Resources and Modules
- [8 tips on managing the Coronavirus Scare as a Parent of a Child With Autism](#), Autism Parenting Magazine
- [7 Strategies to Support Individuals with ASD through Uncertain Times](#), UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute Autism Team
- Support services in South Australia: [Autism SA](#) and [NOVITA](#).

If you are seeking advice for the support available for children with a disability the NDIS have compiled some information: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information and support](#).



# Learning from home

For many, learning from home is a new and challenging experience for both parents and children. Home schooling has become a temporary necessity whilst we navigate what our children’s education is going to look like in the face of COVID-19.

The [Department for Education](#) has set up [Our Learning SA](#) – continued learning between school and home, which provides extensive learning resources for families and teachers that support the Early Years Framework and the Australian Curriculum. Their learning resources include: [Setting up learning at home](#) and reading with your children and specific year level resources for: [Preschool children](#), [Reception to Year 2](#), [Years 3 to 6](#), [Years 7 to 10](#), [Stage 1 and 2](#).

## 8 tips for schooling from home

Mother of two and SA environmental consultant, Claire Lock has provided a number of home-schooling tips and a daily plan via the [Nature Play SA blog](#). As a foundation, their family (with children aged 8 and 11) has focussed on what they ‘can do’ in this situation. This has included providing a sense of safety and security and allowing time and flexibility to create new family routines. The 8 tips, which can be adapted for individual family situations, are:

- 1 **Involve children in planning** – Creating a home school plan can be a collaborative effort, enabling buy-in and agreement from all family members. It can also help to set boundaries whilst allowing ample opportunities for choice
- 2 **Include exercise** – Make exercise a regular part of everyday: physical activity is vital to get bodies moving, release mood-boosting endorphins, and support healthy immune systems
- 3 **Prioritise nature time** – Thread nature time throughout the home school day: allow for free play outdoors but also consider how much home schooling be done outdoors or have a nature-based focus
- 4 **Be present for study** – Study time may be more focussed with an adult present to help guide learning or respond to questions. Don't worry about what you 'don't know' - this is an opportunity to wonder and learn together
- 5 **Set boundaries for screen time** – Technology offers access to many beneficial educational tools and resources. Agreed times for devices can be set as part of family home school planning to help ensure a balance with screen and green time





## 8 tips for schooling from home - continued...

- 6 **Stay connected** – Find ways to support children to stay connected with family and friends whilst social distancing
- 7 **Go wild** – If Government guidelines for social distancing allow, consider accessing nearby wild spaces like National Parks or Botanic Gardens as part of learning opportunities
- 8 **Take time out** – Be flexible and take time out to look after yourself or your family's needs. Recognise we are all doing the best we can during this time.

For education updates see:

- [Advice, FAQ's, and resources for parents students and educators](#) from Department for Education
- [Updates and a FAQ's from Catholic Education South Australia](#)
- [Updates and resources from the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia.](#)



# Resources for supporting adults through COVID-19

Looking after our own mental health is imperative to ensuring we can cope during this time and support our children as best we can under the circumstances. Some resources that may help keep mental health in check include:

- [Coronavirus Mental Health Support Service](#), Beyond Blue
- Advice and tips on [Mental health and wellbeing during the Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak](#), Lifeline
- Advice and support options from the [SA Mental Health Commission](#)
- Advice and tips on [COVID-19: mental health in uncertain times](#) from the Mental Health Coalition of South Australia
- Advice, tips and support for [Mental Health and COVID-19](#), Department of Health, Australian Government
- Community services available through [Department for Human Services](#) such as [disability](#), [domestic violence](#), [disaster recovery](#), and [early intervention to support children's safety and wellbeing](#)
- [10 ways to take care of yourself during Coronavirus](#), Reach Out
- [Tips for coping with anxiety through Coronavirus](#), The Australian Psychological Society
- [Tips for managing stress, anxiety and wellbeing through COVID-19](#), Black Dog Institute
- Resources and advice for [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders](#) staying healthy and strong during the coronavirus outbreak, Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia
- [The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation \(NACCHO\)](#).

## Working from home

Lifeline have provided a [Tool Kit for working from home – how to manage our mental health and wellbeing](#) through Coronavirus. Their key tips are summarised below:

- Have start and finish times
- Wake up more than 5 minutes before your workday begins
- Get changed out of your pyjamas every morning
- Shut down your computer and pack away your work gear every day
- Separate your workspace from day-to-day space
- Create a routine that enables you to unwind at the end of each day
- Schedule regular breaks
- Make sure you get some physical activity
- Stay connected through platforms such as video-based platforms.

## 5 tips on taking a nature break when working from home

When working from home it can be tricky to find the right balance and to maintain focus. We've devised a short list to incorporate into your daily work from home routine:

- 1 Position your workspace where you have a view of plants, the sky, or other natural features
- 2 When weather permits have your closest window open for fresh air, a soft breeze, or to hear the birds
- 3 Step outside for your breaks and look at nature like a tree, clouds or birds (if possible, enjoy your lunch outside)
- 4 Decorate your workspace with some greenery like an indoor plant or a vase with cuttings from the garden
- 5 If you take a phone call, step outside for fresh air and calming sensory stimulation.



### Five Ways to Wellbeing, Healthy Parks Healthy People SA

*SA Health's 'five ways to wellbeing' provide ways to improve mental wellbeing no matter where you are or what time it is and in a way that suits you.*

**Connect:** [Make time for people and enjoy the world around you](#)

**Be Active:** [Move your body and breathe in the fresh air](#)

**Take Notice:** [Find a moment to take in the beauty of nature](#)

**Keep Learning:** [Be curious about nature and discover something new](#)

**Give:** [Do something nice for someone and for the environment.](#)

## Further information and support

- [Beyond Blue](#) 1300 22 4636 (beyondblue.org.au)
- [Lifeline Australia](#) 13 11 14 (lifeline.org.au)
- [Mental Health impacts of Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) fact sheet](#), SA Health
- SA COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line 8am to 8pm 1800 632 753
- [Regional Access Program](#) (country areas) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week 1300 032 186 (saregionalaccess.org.au)
- [Lived Experience Telephone Support Service](#) (LETSS) 5pm – 11:30 pm (a peer mental health support line) 1800 013 755 (letss.org.au)
- [A list of digital mental health services](#), Department of Health
- [Youth Beyond Blue](#) (under 25 years of age) 1300 224 636
- [Headspace](#) (under 25 years of age) 1800 650 890
- [Kids Helpline](#) (under 25 years of age) 1800 55 1800.



## Turn to Nature

*“Spending time in nature, by watching a sunset, gazing at the ocean or mountains, sitting in a park, escaping to the countryside or a nature retreat, or even just spending a few minutes to stare out the window, provides us with the opportunity to rest, reflect, and restore our very selves”*

[COURTNEY ACKERMAN](#), AUTHOR AND RESEARCHER

Now, more than ever, our minds are in need of connection – with each other and in a world that seems more physically distant than ever. Anxiety and unease are on the rise and understandably so. Adults and children are faced with an emotionally challenging time now and in the months ahead. Thankfully there are strategies to support mental health and wellbeing which are derived from time in nature. And by ‘nature’ we mean a place where you can see the clouds, watch the trees, hear the birds or feel the elements.

Here are some ways to help calm your family’s mind – and if done regularly, can become part of your daily and weekly routine.

### 5 practical ways to use nature for your mental health

- 1 Find a daily sit spot (a powerful form of mindfulness). Your backyard, neighbourhood or local nature patch is ideal. Sit there without saying a word for a minute or so – gradually make it longer and reflect on the benefits you feel from practicing this over time
- 2 Tend to a garden and plant something that you can nurture, harvest, eat and cook
- 3 Start a nature journal – each day after time spent outside write, draw or paint something you noticed. See where your nature journaling takes you
- 4 Visit a wild place close to your home to walk amongst nature (see social distancing and self-isolation guidelines before venturing out)
- 5 Plant a native seedling or give a plant in your garden extra care. Watch as it grows and responds to your nurturing efforts.



## Daily nature checklist for self-isolation

If you are in self-isolation, you can still get valuable nature time. Here are a few things that may help:

- 1 Take a few moments for sky gazing: watch the clouds drift; the colours of the sky as the sun rises and sets; or gaze at the stars as they begin to shine
- 2 Open the doors or windows in the morning and afternoon and listen to the birds
- 3 Notice the feel of the wind, sunshine or rain on your skin
- 4 Sit outside or by a window where you can see something green for an hour. Enjoy a warm cuppa, read a book or chat with a family member or friend
- 5 Eat meals or snacks outside in your yard or balcony – take your time
- 6 Walk around the backyard, do an exercise routine, tend to the garden, or do some home maintenance to keep you active and absorbing vitamin D
- 7 Enjoy free play outside at home with sensory opportunities (water, mud, sand, leaves, etc).

If you or any of your family or friends are struggling, support for mental health is available via organisations such as [Lifeline](#) 13 11 14 and [Beyond Blue](#) 1300 22 4636.



### Benefits of nature for your mental health

- Reduces anxiety
- Reduces stress
- Helps improve concentration
- Strengthens social skills and relationships
- Develops a connection for the natural world
- Increases and diversifies physical activity.

Source: [Learning Outdoors: Benefits/Risks](#), Nature Play SA

## Further information and resources

- [Mental Health and the Calming Refrains of Nature](#), Nature Play SA
- [25 things to do in Autumn](#), Nature Play SA
- [Go Wild](#) challenge (a series of free downloadable cards with activities), Nature Play SA
- [Five ways to Wellbeing](#), SA Health
- [10 Nature Activities to Help Get Your Family Through the Coronavirus Pandemic](#), a blog by Richard Louv from the Children and Nature Network
- [25 Fun Mindfulness Activities for Children and Teens \(+Tips!\)](#) by PositivePsychology.com
- [How mindfulness can help during Coronavirus](#), Smiling Mind
- Find a National Park near you, [National Parks and Wildlife Service, South Australia](#)
- Find a Botanic Gardens near you, [Botanic Gardens of South Australia](#)
- Find a reservoir near you, [Reservoirs SA](#).

# Balance Green and Screen Time



*“Unlike television, nature does not steal time; it amplifies it”*

[RICHARD LOUV](#), AUTHOR AND JOURNALIST

Technology and social media can have great benefits during COVID-19 including helping us to stay connected with friends and family, providing access to information and learning materials, and offering a source for creativity, fun and entertainment.

However, it is also easy to see screens becoming a dominating factor of our lives whilst we grapple with the need to change our lifestyle to adopt somewhat sedentary behaviours. For many, constant exposure to media relating to [COVID-19](#) can make our minds heavy with worry and fear. Too much screen time can also take away valuable time spent connecting, creating, chatting, playing, or reading as a family. And critically, we also need to keep children safe online whilst many families increase screen time as learning methods and lifestyles adapt during this pandemic.

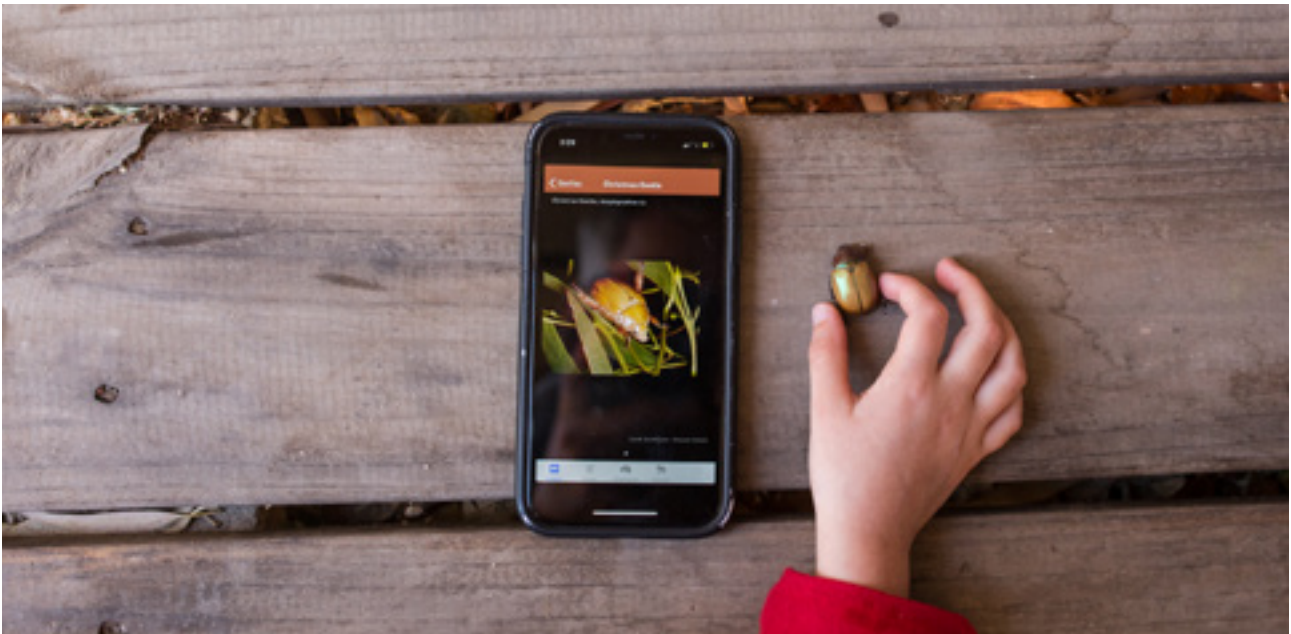
Some things we can do to maintain a healthy use of technology during COVID-19 include giving our minds a break by choosing to log-off from social media or selecting specific times to go online for latest [Government advice](#). With screen time, every family is different and the most important thing to remember is balance and know that you will find the family rhythm that works for you. Some days our children may have more screen time than we'd like them to but if we aim for a little more green time than screen time, this helps with moderation. Free resources for keeping children safe online are shared in this section, including the Australian Government's [COVID-19: an online safety kit for parents and carers](#).

## 5 ways to use technology during COVID-19

- 1 Download a bird app and identify what birds are calling in your backyard. Learn about their behaviour, their breeding habits and see if you can notice any of this in action. If you want to go beyond birds, download a native wildlife app (such as the South Australian Museum Field Guide to South Australian Fauna) to learn about other local wildlife
- 2 Download a stargazing app and see if you can find the Southern Cross and any of the planets
- 3 Make a short film on a tablet/smart phone about the type nature in your backyard or neighbourhood. Share it with a friend via a digital platform
- 4 Go to the [Bureau of Meteorology](#) (BOM) website and learn how to read the weather, tides, and about [Indigenous weather knowledge](#)
- 5 Using a smart phone or digital camera take photos of the details of nature in your backyard, neighbourhood or local patch of nature.







## 5 better conversations to have about screens with your kids

A SUMMARY OF A [BLOG POST BY DR JUSTIN COULSON](#) FROM HAPPY FAMILIES

- 1 **Talk about the positive screen time your family enjoys** – have a conversation about what screen time makes your life better. When used thoughtfully screen time can have positive benefits to families.
- 2 **Talk about what type, not how much** – we can often get caught up in how much screen time, but the quality really matters. Some online content can impact mental health and it's important to have these conversations.
- 3 **Talk about context** – there is a time and place for screens. At times, there could be something else your child could be doing that would have a more positive impact on their life. Play, face-to-face contact, reading, chores, and making positive choices are important windows of opportunity for children that need to be considered when talking about screens.
- 4 **Talk about relationships** – screens can affect relationships. Have conversations about how much you value time spent together without devices and how good it is for everyone's happiness and wellbeing.
- 5 **Talk about safety** – conversations about safety online is paramount particularly around privacy, permanency, identity deceit, and trolling.

*Dr Justin Coulson is one of Australia's leading experts in the areas of parenting, relationships and wellbeing. Parenting SA is holding a [free webinar](#) for parents to be delivered by Dr Justin Coulson and Dr Kristy Goodwin, 7.30pm Tuesday 12 May. The webinar will be shaped to the needs of parents adapting to this new situation, with a focus on making the best use of technology.*

## Further information and resources

- [COVID-19 – an online safety kit for parents and carers](#), eSafetyCommissioner, Australian Government
- [COVID-19 – protecting children from online abuse](#), eSafetyCommissioner, Australian Government
- [How to use parental controls to and other tools to maximise online safety at home](#), eSafetyCommissioner, Australian Government
- [Tips for Cyber Safety](#), Parenting SA
- [Cyber Safety information for families and students](#), Department for Education
- [Be Connected](#): tips, advice and learning resources on if you are just starting to use technology in the digital world (ideal for grandparents), Australian Government
- [Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines and the Australian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines](#) (provides an overview of screen time), Department of Health.



# Keep Active

*“Regular physical activity is vital for our children's development and wellbeing as it provides emotional, social and overall health benefits and has been linked to improved academic performance”*

SARAH SUTTER, CEO NATURE PLAY SA

In addition to physical and cardiovascular health, keeping active often has a strong and meaningful social component. For some, gyms, sporting clubs, playgrounds, skate parks and outdoor gyms are the go-to. Should these places experience extended closures or cancellations, or other usual modes of physical activity are impacted, then we need to consider how to keep our bodies active both at home and in nature.

The Australian Government has guidelines for recommended levels of physical activity and we know that every bit of activity you can build into your day also helps (particularly for your wellbeing). As a family you could plan ways of incorporating small chunks of physical activity throughout your day and see what works best for you.

There are plenty of opportunities for children to stay active during COVID-19, whether through sporting practice or other physical ways to have fun. Here are 5 ways to get you started:

## 5 ways to keep active during Covid-19

- 1 Begin a yoga or stretching routine in the backyard or head to a natural place close to home (try online videos to get started)
- 2 Set up for ball skills or your favourite sporting practice in your yard (get creative with how you could set up your space, like making cricket stumps from what you have at home)
- 3 Run, walk, scoot or bike ride around your neighbourhood or closest nature patch with trails
- 4 Create your own dance routine in the backyard or a space inside your home. Involve your family in the routine or put on a special performance
- 5 Create your own obstacle course in the backyard. Have a family contest or record and try to beat your own 'personal best' time.





## Benefits of children and young people keeping active

- Help with management of anxiety and stress
- Support brain development and encourage self-confidence and independence
- Provide fun experiences
- Help develop cooperation and teamwork skills
- Improved self-esteem and confidence
- Improved concentration
- Reduced risk of disease and unhealthy weight gain
- Help achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- Build strong bones and muscles whilst improving balance, movement and coordination skills.

*Adapted from Australian Government, [Department of Health](#)*

## How much physical activity should kids and adults get?

The Australian Government's Department of Health has devised the [National Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep Recommendations for Children and Young People](#) as a guide for physical activity – however the key message is to move every day and whatever physical activity you are able to get will benefit your family's wellbeing.

**Infants (Birth to one year)** should have plenty of supervised interactive floor-based play. For those not yet mobile, 30 minutes of tummy time including reaching and grasping, pushing and pulling, and crawling spread throughout the day during awake periods is ideal.

**Toddlers (1 to 2 years)** should spend around **3 hours** or more a day doing a variety of physical activities including energetic play such as running, jumping and twirling throughout the day.

**Pre-schoolers (3 to 5 years)** should spend around **3 hours** or more a day in a variety of physical activities. An hour of that should be energetic play such as running, jumping and kicking and throwing, spread throughout the day.

**5-17 years** should have around an **hour** or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. Throughout the week (around 3 times) you should aim for several hours of a variety of light physical activities; activities that are vigorous, as well as those that strengthen muscle and bone.

**18-64 years** should aim for between **2 ½ to 5 hours** of moderate intensity physical activity or **1 ¼ to 2 ½ hours** of vigorous intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination of both moderate and vigorous activities, each week.

**65 +** should be active every day in as many ways as possible that incorporates fitness, strength, balance and flexibility (ideally 30 minutes a day). If you are starting to be more physically active, you should start at a level that is easily manageable and gradually build from there.

*Adapted from [National Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep Recommendations for Children and Young People](#)*



## Further information and resources

- An App for teens "[Resistance Training for Teens](#)", University of Newcastle
- [Videos, tips and resources](#) to help parents support their children's physical activity, health and learning, iPlay
- [Active play Ideas for families](#), Blue Earth
- [Family Activity Pack](#) focused on moving more and sitting less, Transform-us
- [24-Hour Movement Guidelines for the Early Years \(Birth to 5 years\)](#), Australian Government, Department of Health
- [24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Young People \(5-17 years\)](#), Australian Government, Department of Health
- [Tips and ideas for 65+](#), Australian Government, Department of Health
- [Fact sheet](#) on Australia's Physical Activity & Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Adults (18-64 years)
- [Cosmic Kids Yoga YouTube channel](#)
- [Find your 30: Ideas and videos that day of physical activity](#), Sport Australia.



## Eat Healthy

*“Active, growing children require good nutrition to build healthy bodies and to help them be the best they can be. Many attitudes towards food are shaped during early school years, forming the basis for future eating habits. As parents we can help our children build healthy foundations by encouraging a love of good food and good nutrition throughout these years”*

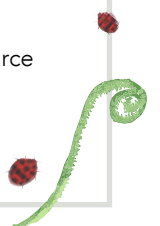
[NUTRITION AUSTRALIA](#)

Healthy eating can be fun particularly when spending time outside in the garden where children are part of the planning, care and maintenance of veggies, herbs and fruit trees. Staying at home enables you to care for your garden and reap the benefits of seasonal growing, eating and cooking.

If you don't have access to a home or balcony garden, consider other options for healthy eating like ensuring there are fresh fruit and vegetables in your shopping (many fruit and vegetable shops are now also offering home delivery during COVID-19). Being at home more also opens up the opportunity to try new healthy recipes and cooking as a family.

### 5 tips on eating healthy at home

- 1 Grow your own veggies. Try leafy greens and root vegetables if you're starting out and herbs such as basil, thyme, oregano, mint and coriander (easy to grow and can be grown in pots!)
- 2 Eat and cook with seasonal produce such as stone fruit and cherries in summer, figs and grapes in autumn and citrus in the cooler months
- 3 Plant some fruit trees. The best season to plant fruit trees is winter for stone fruit, apples and mulberries and late spring or early summer for citrus
- 4 Cook together with a homemade recipe or find something in an old cookbook or from an online source (try Pinterest for recipes)
- 5 Play/create a game that involves identifying fruit and vegetables like [bingo](#) or [memory](#).





## Benefits of children eating healthy

- Builds the foundations for healthy growth, development and learning
- Improved concentration and mood regulation
- Increased energy throughout the day
- Maintain body weight
- Ensures bone strength, good oral health and protection from infections
- Reduces the risk of developing diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis
- Helps maintain body weight, blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Sourced from [SA Health](#) and [Department for Education](#)

## 5 easy and fast-growing veggies to plant

- 1 Spinach and silverbeet (plant April to September)
- 2 Carrots (plant all year except winter months)
- 3 Radishes (plant all year round)
- 4 Beetroot (plant any month except May or June)
- 5 Strawberries (plant May to July).

According to the [Australian Guide to Healthy Eating](#) children should be eating the following on a daily basis:

- Plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits,
- Plenty of cereals, including breads, rice, pasta and noodles – preferably wholegrain
- Lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives – choose reduced-fat choices where possible.
- Plenty of water.

## Further information and resources

- [Healthy eating at home tips](#), SA Health
- [Healthy eating tips](#), SA Health
- The [Australian Government's Guide to Healthy Eating](#) is a food selection guide which visually represents the proportion of the five food groups recommended for consumption each day
- Recipes, games, posters and information on healthy eating via the '[Eat rainbow](#)' campaign by SA Health
- [Recipes and tips on healthy eating](#), The Heart Foundation
- [South Australian tips](#) from Sophie Thomson, Sophie's Patch
- [School examples and resources](#) for Kitchen Gardens, Natural Resources and Mt Lofty Ranges, Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges.
- [Useful tips and tricks](#), Gardening Australia, ABC
- [Facts sheets](#) and information on sustainable gardening, Sustainable Gardening Australia.



## Slow Down

*“For all its many challenges, this pandemic is also an opportunity for parents. A chance to show our kids that while we cannot always control what happens around us, we can control how we choose to respond to it”*

[GRIFF LONGLEY](#), CEO NATURE PLAY WA

With increased time at home, many of us are trying to find constructive ways to pass the time whilst ensuring our children’s developmental needs are met through education and play. We are living in unprecedented conditions and it’s easy to feel overwhelmed or stressed. However, being home together and engaging in enjoyable family-based activities can have significant benefits to children and family units.

Take your time together, slow down and progress through your days – fill them with creative projects, home cooking, reading, playing games, spending time outside, and finding ways to bring fresh air to your lives. Meditation, yoga, free play and time in nature are also ways to help us slow down.

### 5 ways to slow down

- 1 Create an outdoor nook with some cushions, a picnic rug, blanket and a place to put some snacks and a warm drink. Try daily meditation, mindfulness and/or reading
- 2 Get creative and paint portraits of nature, your family, a creature, or imaginative place
- 3 Read your favourite books and poetry to one another
- 4 Create a scavenger hunt challenge. Have each person in your family make a backyard scavenger hunt list with items such as coloured rocks, long leaves, insects and other things you find interesting. Once complete, swap lists and go on a hunt!
- 5 Start a gratitude journal. At the end of each day reflect and write or draw what you are grateful for that day.



### Further information and resources

- [Ideas and activities for families](#), Nature Play SA
- [Meditation for kids](#), Headspace
- [25 Fun Mindfulness Activities for Children and Teens \(+Tips!\)](#), PositivePsychology.com
- [How mindfulness can help during Coronavirus](#) blog by Smiling Mind



# Rediscover Childhood

*“Childhood is a collection of hundreds of different moments, experiences and discoveries. They don’t have to be in grand or wild places – finding colourful feathers, collecting magical stones, creating flower potions and stews or noticing the first butterfly of spring can all be done in a backyard or local patch of nature.”*

JASON TYNDALL, NATURE PLAY SA

Childhood is a critical window to physical, cognitive, social and sensory development. Whilst we need to do our best to enable development opportunities, it is also important to recognise the circumstances we are facing as parents, carers and community during COVID-19.

One of the things that we, as parents, can influence during this pandemic is the childhood experiences that will form into long-lasting positive memories. Whilst many may be confined with social distancing and self-isolation, it doesn’t prevent us from creating positive play experiences and opportunities, particularly outdoors in our backyards and neighbourhoods. If Government advice permits, or once restrictions ease, then childhood can venture further into wild places with ancient trees, sweeping landscapes, creeks and places that feel like nature is everywhere you look.

## 5 ways to rediscover childhood

- 1 Gather up old pots and pans - add water, dirt and a few bits and pieces of nature and make some stew, soup or mud pies
- 2 Have a backyard (or living room) camp out - snuggle under a blanket, tell stories, play games and try to spot nightlife with a torch
- 3 Using sticks, string, old sheets and cardboard boxes build a fort big enough to have lunch in
- 4 Create small world play by finding bark, stones, sticks, dirt, sand, flowers and other natural things that create a play setting. Introduce little characters (sticks or stones with drawn/painted on eyes) and if possible add some water as lakes, rivers and miniature waterfalls
- 5 Find a stick and decorate it with old yarn/string, feathers, paint or other creative things and invent a game that you can play together.







## Benefits of outdoor play

- Improved wellbeing and mental health
- Improves language development
- Improves problem solving skills
- Greater ability to assess risks
- Increased concentration
- Improved self-esteem
- Positive views on physical activity.

*Adapted from [Beyond Blue to Green: the benefits of contact with nature for mental health and well-being](#).*

## Further information and resources

- [The importance of mud play for children](#), Nature Play SA
- [The importance of loose parts for children](#), Nature Play SA
- [Creating your own backyard natural playspace](#), Nature Play SA
- [The importance of nature for babies](#), Nature Play SA
- [25 things to do in Autumn](#), Nature Play SA.



## Stay Connected

*“Research after the SARS pandemic in Hong Kong in 2008, provides evidence of the significance of connection through epidemics. It found that residents in Hong Kong experienced increased social connectedness, which offset the negative mental health impacts of the pandemic”*

[LIFELINE VIA JOURNAL OF INFECTION](#)

Being socially connected is more important than ever. Whilst we need to be physically distant, there are many ways to stay connected with friends, family and community beyond face-to-face catch ups. Staying connected can play an important role in supporting mental health and wellbeing, and looking out for those who are more vulnerable in our communities.

Many mental health organisations recommend that if you're not feeling ok then talking to someone can make a big difference. If you are feeling anxiety, stress or concern during the COVID outbreak, please contact organisations such as [Beyond Blue](#) and [Lifeline](#) for around-the-clock mental and crisis health services.

### 5 ways to stay connected

- 1 Provide a message of hope to your community: paint or draw a rainbow to display in your front window; a teddy in your window for others to spot; or take to your footpath with chalk to draw rainbows and leave messages of hope
- 2 Send a hand-made card to a friend or relative or write a letter and post it
- 3 Skype or Facetime with a best friend, relative or someone you haven't seen for a while
- 4 Use 'Zoom' or another similar application to have a group catch up and online cuppa with friends
- 5 Create a playlist of your favourite songs and share with your friends on Spotify or Apple Music.





## Benefits of staying socially connected

- Increased feelings of belonging and purpose
- Increased levels of happiness
- Reduced levels of stress
- Improved self-worth and confidence.

Source: [MindWise Innovations](#)

## Further information and resources

- Advice for [staying connected in challenging times](#), RUOK
- [Be Connected](#): tips, advice and learning resources on if you are just starting to use technology in the digital world (ideal for grandparents), Australian Government
- [COVID-19 – an online safety kit for parents and carers](#), eSafetyCommissioner, Australian Government
- [COVID-19 – protecting children from online abuse](#), eSafetyCommissioner, Australian Government
- [How to use parental controls to and other tools to maximise online safety at home](#), eSafetyCommissioner, Australian Government
- [Tips for Cyber Safety](#), Parenting SA
- [Cyber Safety information for families and students](#), Department for Education.

# 35 things to do as a family during COVID-19



The ideas shared in Section 1 have been compiled into a list of 35 things to do as a family during COVID-19.

*Note: Please stay informed with latest COVID-19 advice from both the Australian Government and State Government.*



## Turn to Nature

- 1 Find a daily sit spot (a powerful form of mindfulness). Your backyard, neighbourhood or local nature patch is ideal. Sit there without saying a word for a minute or so – gradually make it longer and reflect on the benefits you feel from practicing this over time
- 2 Tend to a garden and plant something that you can nurture, harvest, eat and cook
- 3 Start a nature journal – each day after time spent in the yard or outside write, draw or paint something you noticed. See where your nature journaling takes you (there is no right or wrong way)
- 4 Visit a wild place close to your home to walk amongst nature (see social distancing and self-isolation guidelines before venturing out)
- 5 Plant a native seedling or give a plant in your garden extra care. Watch as it grows and responds to your nurturing efforts

## Balance Green and Screen Time

- 6 Download a bird app and identify what birds are calling in your backyard. Learn about their behaviour, breeding habits and see if you notice any of this in action. If you want to go beyond birds, download a native wildlife app (such as the South Australian Museum Field Guide to South Australian Fauna) and learn other local wildlife
- 7 Download a stargazing app and see if you can find the Southern Cross and any of the planets
- 8 Make a short film on a tablet/smart phone about the type nature in your backyard or neighbourhood. Share it with a friend via a digital platform
- 9 Go to the [Bureau of Meteorology](#) website and learn how to read the weather, tides and about [Indigenous weather knowledge](#)
- 10 Using a smart phone or digital camera take photos of the details of nature in your backyard, neighbourhood or local patch of nature



## Keep Active

- 11 Begin a yoga or stretching routine in the backyard or head to a natural place close to home (try online videos to get started)
- 12 Set up for ball skills or your favourite sporting practice in your yard (get creative with how you could set up your space, like making cricket stumps from what you have at home)
- 13 Run, walk, scoot or bike ride around your neighbourhood or closest nature patch with trails
- 14 Create your own dance routine in the backyard or a space inside your home. Involve your family in the routine or put on a special performance
- 15 Create your own obstacle course in the backyard. Have a family contest or record and try to beat your own 'personal best' time

## Eat Healthy

- 16 Grow your own veggies. Try leafy greens and root vegetables if you're starting out and herbs such as basil, thyme, oregano, mint and coriander (easy to grow and can be grown in pots!)
- 17 Eat and cook with seasonal produce such as stone fruit and cherries in summer, figs and grapes in autumn and citrus in the cooler months
- 18 Plant some fruit trees. The best season to plant fruit trees is winter for stone fruit, apples and mulberries and late spring or early summer for citrus
- 19 Cook together with a homemade recipe or find something in an old cookbook or online source (try Pinterest for recipes)
- 20 Play/create a game that involves identifying fruit and vegetables, like bingo or memory

## Slow Down

- 21 Create an outdoor nook with some cushions, a picnic rug, blanket and a place to put some snacks and a warm drink. Try daily meditation, mindfulness and/or reading
- 22 Get creative and paint portraits of nature, your family, a creature, or imaginative place
- 23 Read your favourite books and poetry to one another
- 24 Create a scavenger hunt challenge. Have each person in your family make a backyard scavenger hunt list with items such as coloured rocks, long leaves, insects and other things you find interesting. Once complete, swap lists and go on a hunt!
- 25 Start a gratitude journal. At the end of each day reflect and write or draw what you are grateful for that day

## Rediscover Childhood

- 26 Gather up old pots and pans - add water, dirt and a few bits and pieces of nature and make some stew, soup or mud pies
- 27 Have a backyard (or living room) camp out - snuggle under a blanket, tell stories, play games and try to spot nightlife with a torch
- 28 Using sticks, string, old sheets and cardboard boxes build a backyard fort big enough to have lunch in
- 29 Create a small world by finding bark, stones, sticks, dirt, sand, flowers and other natural things. Introduce little characters such as painted sticks or stones
- 30 Find a stick and decorate it with old yarn/string, feathers, paint or other creative things and invent a game that you can play together

## Stay Connected

- 31 Provide a message of hope to your community: paint or draw a rainbow to display in your front window; place teddy in your window for others to spot; or take to your footpath with chalk to draw rainbows and leave messages of hope.
- 32 Send a hand-made card to a friend or relative or write a letter and post it
- 33 Skype or Facetime with a best friend, relative or someone you haven't seen for a while
- 34 Use 'Zoom' or another similar application to have group catch up and online cuppa with friends
- 35 Create a playlist of your favourite songs and share with your friends on Spotify or Apple Music.





## SECTION TWO:

### Practical ideas and inspiration to do as a family during COVID-19

Section one shared mental health strategies using nature as inspiration, with a focus on spending more time together as a family. Section two now explores experiences that harness creativity, curiosity and imagination during COVID-19 (and beyond).

From indoor activities, to the backyard, nearby nature and wilder spaces, there are abundant opportunities for families to make, do and discover; setting a positive narrative of childhood during a time that is largely defined by unease and uncertainty. Fundamentally, childhood is a world of its own with only a few important ingredients needed for adults to support children engage and connect with nature:

**Time:** Children need time and during COVID-19 they will have it. Time to explore the garden; to get dirty; to notice clouds and birds; to feel the wind on their skin; to sing and dance; and to spend quality time with family. With structured activities such as sport postponed, this rare moment in time enables increased free play at home (and for us as parents to notice how beneficial it is for our kids). Sometimes we need patience as our children find their own play rhythms outside – but with time, they will find it.

**Diversity:** Stimulating play at home doesn't require large space but can benefit from a diverse one. Spaces to paint and create; to mix potions, stews and mud pies; to quietly ponder or sit; to allow children's bodies to move by lifting, climbing or running; to grow and care for something. Whatever space you have, adding some diversity will help enrich childhood at home.

**Nature:** Nature is a calming force for adults and children: we all need it. Adults play an important role in helping to reveal the world of nature to our children, even from our homes. We don't need to know much about plants and animals we just need to know how to be curious. Maybe we help find out what a particular bird is that visits our garden daily or help to begin a nature journal. Whatever space we have, or nature we have access to, being curious with our children is always accessible.

**Adult perspective:** Is nature important for children's mental health, creativity, imagination and academic achievement? Is building a connection with the natural world important for a child's sense of wonder and desire to nurture and love? Is playing outside with natural elements important for sensory development, problem solving, confidence, resilience and reducing anxiety and stress? Can childhood still thrive during COVID-19? The answer to all of these questions is a resounding yes. We just need to believe and value it.

In this section there are some unique and wonderful opportunities to immerse your family in good company, creativity and nature. Use these ideas as described, or adapt to your own circumstances. We hope you find a level of comfort, relief, and hope as you flick through the pages and put this guide into practice



*BACKYARD*



# Magnificent Mud

JASON TYNDALL & MICHELLE TYNDALL

Gritty, cold, wet, sloppy, icky, sticky, joyous mud – the secret weapon in your sensory-rich outdoor toolkit. It may be messy, it may even be inconvenient, but it brings with it the makings of pure happiness.

Mud is one of those things that can make us – parents – cringe. The dirty footprints, filthy bathtub and extra washing are enough to make anyone shout, “Stay out of the mud!” But, you’d be doing your children a disservice. It’s all about the cost, versus the benefit. Yes, it will most likely create some work, especially if your children are young, but the learning opportunities are significant.

Mud play has an extremely important role to play in sensory development, providing a platform for creativity, imagination, resourcefulness and free expression. It’s also

known to strengthen the immune system and trigger the release of serotonin – a chemical that helps to regulate mood.

Mud can, literally, make kids happy.

Whether it’s the creation of a simple mud pie, painting with mud, or experimenting with how it feels on their body, the benefits are well worth the effort.



## Creative inspiration

- 1 Introduce mud play to your little ones by offering mud in containers and allowing them to explore the texture and smell. Try putting things in the mud for them to retrieve and demonstrate the squelching with fingers and toes
- 2 Encourage mud play as a regular part of your backyard offering by constructing a mud kitchen from up-cycled pallets or wood, setting it up with old pots, pans, mixing utensils and measuring cups. If you're not the handy type, mud kitchens can be purchased, or created with a few simple items, such as a children's table and buckets or bowls
- 3 Set-up a mud painting station at an appropriate workspace, such as a mud kitchen or table, remembering it will get dirty. You'll need a bowl of dirt, a bowl of water, a bowl for mixing the 'paint', a stick for stirring, a range of large paint brushes and thick paper. You can also use seedpods, cones and leaves to create texture, stamping and rolling them over the painting. As well as little hands, fingers, feet and toes – let their creativity take over
- 4 Initiate a mud pie 'bake off'. Collect flowers, seedpods, leaves, herbs, cones and twigs, whatever natural loose parts you have available, and lay them out at a suitable workstation, along with a bowl of dirt, a bowl of water, a spare bowl for mixing and a ladle or large spoon. Small tongs, measuring cups, sieves, whisks, muffin trays, eggbeaters and a mortar and pestle also come in handy. When finished, share your favourite thing about each pie
- 5 If you're eager and open to the mess, try creating a temporary mud pit with a giant tarp (just add dirt, water and squealing children).

*\*If the dirt in your backyard isn't suitable, the best thing to buy is a mix of loam and clay from your local landscape supplier. Materials such as potting mix are not suitable and the labels on these items should be followed.*

*\*\* Before picking any plants for use by children, it's important to research the plants you intend to use to determine safety, sensitivity and toxicity.*



## Magnificent mud pie recipe

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup of dirt
- ½ cup of water, added as needed
- Fresh herbs, ground in a mortar and pestle, plus extra for garnish
- 3 sprigs of lavender
- A selection of twigs
- Mixed leaves
- Flowers for decoration, whole or petals removed
- Your own secret ingredient

### OPTIONAL EXTRAS

- Feathers, shells or natural treasures
- Children's waterproof onesies available from the [Nature Play SA online shop](#)

### METHOD

- 1 Mix, stir and decorate to create your own magnificent mud pie
- 2 Hose down waterproof onesie, run a bath and enjoy a warm drink together.

# 10 ingredients to collect for mud play

To help get you get inspired try collecting these ingredients from around your backyard or neighbourhood.

1 Leaves

2 Seed pods

3 Flowers

4 Rocks

5 Feathers

6 Sticks

7 Twigs

8 Bark

9 Dirt

10 Water



# Backyard Critters

JASON TYNDALL & MICHELLE TYNDALL

Backyard critters feature in many children's books. They're familiar, friendly and accessible in story, and just as fascinating and educational in real life.

Backyard critters aren't everybody's cup of tea. In fact, they're easy to label 'dangerous' or to avoid simply because it feels like a lot of effort to learn about them. Especially if you're not overly enthusiastic about 'creepy crawlies'. But it's important to look beyond any ick-factor and consider the important role they play in encouraging children to explore their curiosity, develop empathy towards living creatures and discover basic scientific concepts, such as lifecycles and pollination.

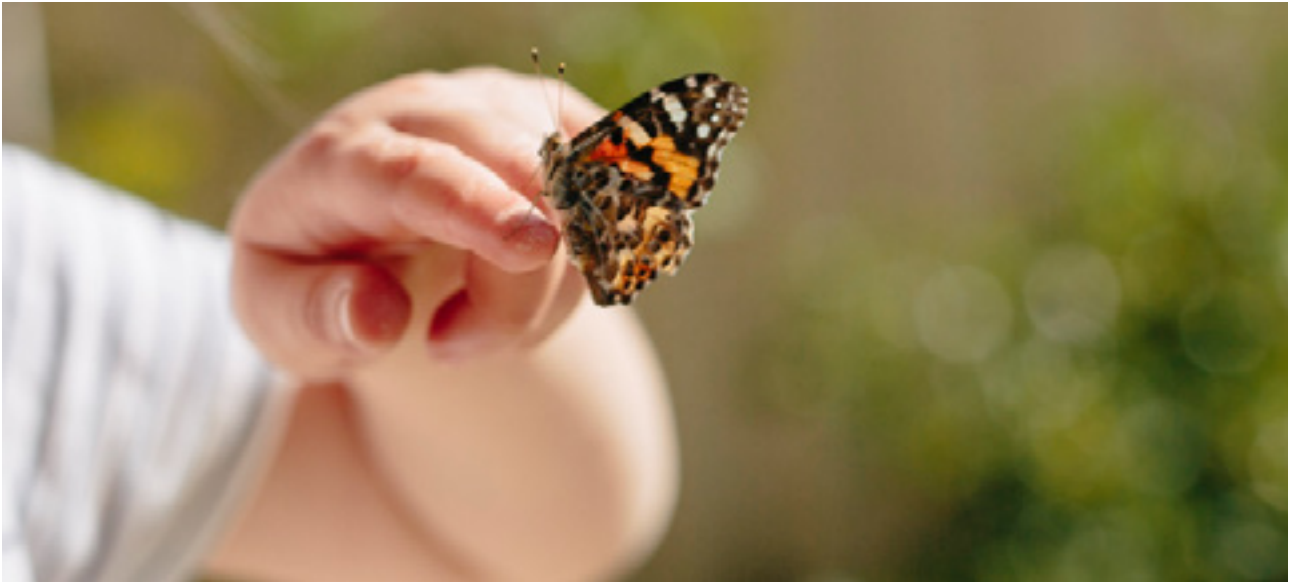
Whether it's giggling at the tickly legs of a slater, feeling the stickiness of a worm or quietly watching a bee pollinate a flower, the benefits for children's sensory and emotional development are innumerable, making back-yard critters a

worthwhile investment in your time – and your family's.

## Getting to know your backyard critters

### NATIVE BEES

Most native bees nest alone, don't have hives and don't make honey. In fact, many like to live in bare soil. They're important for your garden, your veggie patch and the environment, pollinating native plants that in turn support other forms of life. Common native bees include the Blue-banded Bee, Leafcutter Bee, Carpenter Bee, Masked Bee and Resin Bee.



### BUTTERFLIES

What is more fascinating than a caterpillar spinning itself into a chrysalis and emerging as a butterfly? Your little ones may also be interested to know that butterflies taste with their feet, only lay eggs on the plants they know their caterpillars will eat, and they pollinate flowers. Common backyard butterflies include the Lesser Wanderer, Meadow Argus and and Painted Lady.

### LADYBIRDS

Ladybirds are easily recognisable by their colour and spots. In your garden, they help to control aphids – tiny insects that can damage fruit trees, veggies and other plants. Ladybirds are particularly attracted to coriander, dill and carrot flowers, so planting some when you encounter aphids may help. Common Ladybirds include the Transverse Ladybird, Common Spotted Ladybird and 28-Spotted Ladybird.

### SLATERS

Slaters can be found under almost every log or rock and are often called 'roly polys' referring to their ability to roll into a ball, particularly when disturbed. If your kids look closely they will be able to count 13 segments on a slater's body. Interestingly, they're classified as a crustacean, making them a relative of crabs and yabbies.

### WORMS AND BEETLE GRUBS

Digging in soil has a range of health and sensory benefits for children, one of which is the opportunity to discover worms or white beetle grubs. Not only do they keep your garden healthy, they also offer children a chance to take a closer look at soil dwelling critters. Some of the beetle grubs you find may belong to the Christmas Beetle – another critter commonly spotted in the summer months.

## Attracting backyard critters

- 1 Plant colourful flowers that bloom in different seasons (chat to your local hardware store or plant nursery for ideas). Where possible use local native plants
- 2 Introduce movable logs and rocks to peek under
- 3 Start a veggie patch or herb garden
- 4 Grow stone fruit and citrus trees
- 5 Research, make and install a native bee hotel
- 6 Install a bird bath or water source
- 7 Avoid using chemicals such as herbicides and insecticides.

## Observing backyard critters

- 1 Initiate a 'no-touching-spiders' agreement (without expressing fear or dislike – being kind to all creatures can help to build empathy)
- 2 Agree not to touch something if you don't know what it is (find out first)
- 3 Have an identification book handy such as Greater Wildlife of Adelaide to help build your confidence
- 4 Start with slaters, worms and ladybirds – they're generally safe to handle as a beginner
- 5 Remember to wash your hands after handling critters (and note you don't have to handle them, peeking under logs can be just as fun and beneficial)
- 6 Encourage your little ones with equipment such as a magnifying glass or camera.

# 12 backyard critters to find

Backyards are full of life. Most are small and remain hidden during the day – others we can spot flying about as they visit in search of nectar and pollen.



Slaters



Millipedes



Worms



Honeybees



Ladybirds



Slugs



Ants



Earwigs



Beetle larvae



Wolf spiders



Butterflies



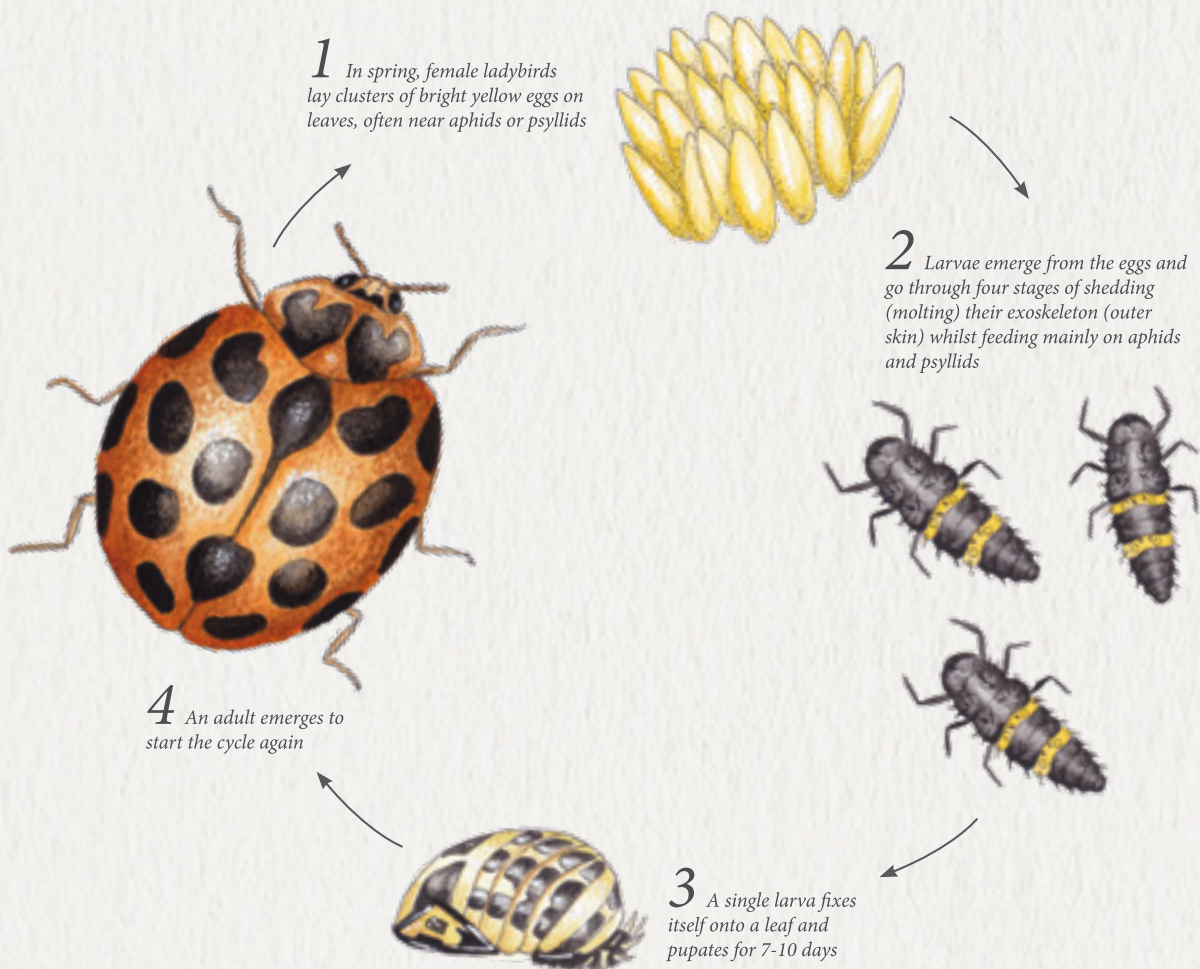
Snails

## LIFE CYCLE OF THE

# Common Spotted Ladybird (*Harmonia conformis*)

~

Of all the insects in the animal kingdom, the adult ladybird is one of the most familiar, with children often quick to recognise their brightly coloured body and black spots and markings. The same can't be said for its larvae, which look nothing like adult ladybirds, but, like the mature insect, can be very beneficial to your garden. As well as being a source of curiosity for little ones, they help to prevent and control aphid damage on your plants, with aphids a key source of food for ladybird larvae.



## FACTS

A fully-grown larva consumes about 50 aphids per day.

Another common ladybird is the Transverse Ladybird that is bright red with V-shaped black markings instead of spots.

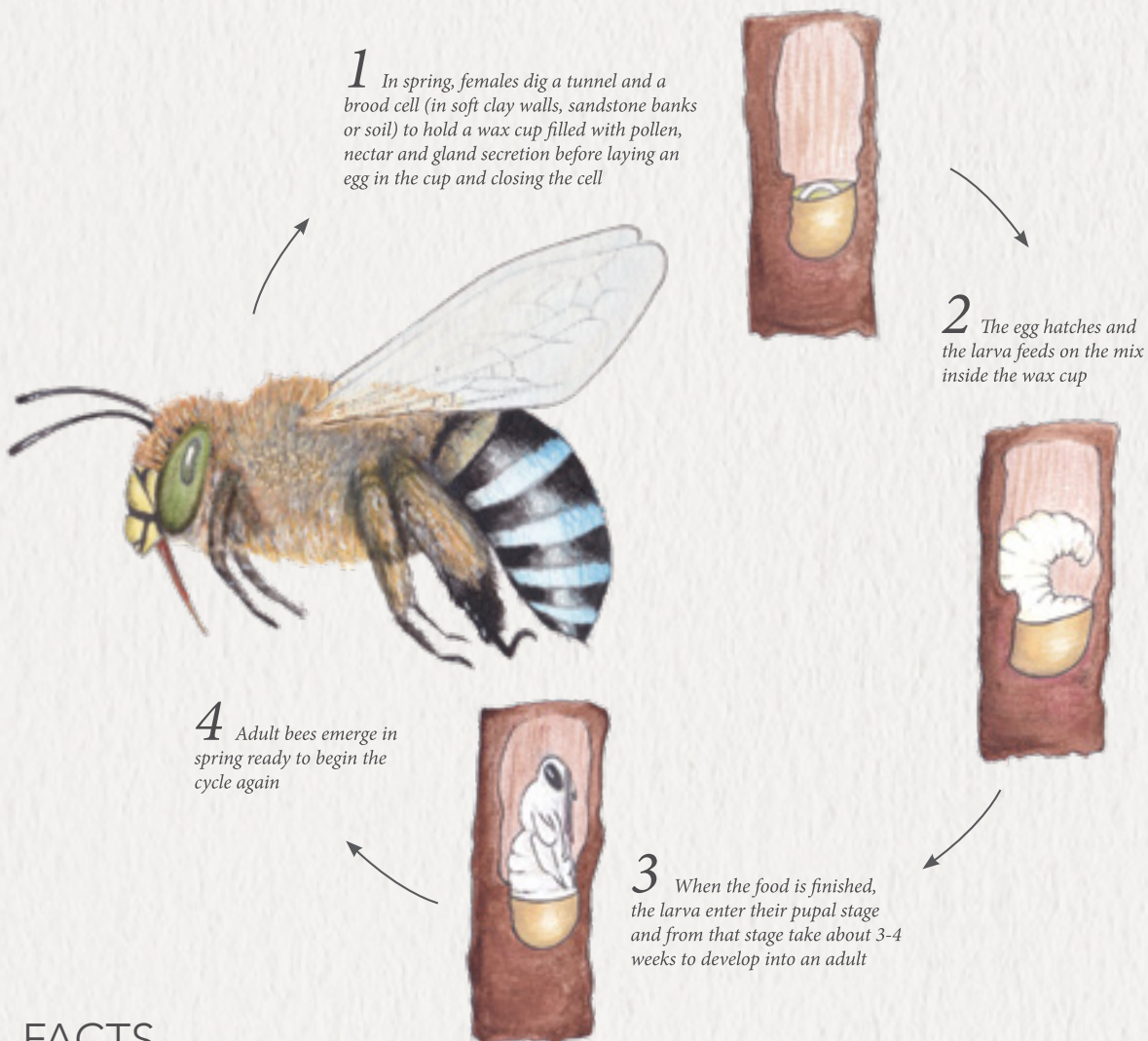
Ladybirds are often attracted to plants from the Apiaceae family such as carrots, celery and coriander.

## LIFE CYCLE OF THE

# Blue-green blue-banded bee (*Amegilla chlorocyanea*)

~

As spring arrives and flowers bloom in our gardens and parks, native bees busy themselves pollinating and building nests. While most people are familiar with the European honey bee, many are surprised to learn that Australia has over 1,650 species of native bees, many of which are solitary and don't make honey. These bees have an important role to play, as many native plants rely solely on them for pollination. One of the most beautiful and recognisable is the blue-green blue-banded bee.



## FACTS

During winter, blue-green blue-banded bee larva don't pupate, but enter a resting phase inside the cell ready to emerge mid-spring.

Unlike European honey bees, these bees 'buzz' pollinate, banging their head on a flower to dislodge pollen at 350 times per second.

Tomato plants require buzz pollination to produce seed and grow larger, juicier and tastier fruit.



# Nature Scavenger Hunt

BEC HALL

A nature scavenger hunt is an ideal activity to encourage exploration, discovery and imagination. They are great for the backyard and other natural areas. Once social distancing is a thing of the past, it's a great activity for children's birthday parties - they are more intriguing and creative than a simple search for hidden sweets!

Scavenger hunts invite children to uncover wonderful natural treasures hidden all around them. Armed with nothing but a list and paper-bag, children will be challenged to find a selection of natural items, that become innately precious through the act of discovery.

When devised with thought, scavenger hunts can help children tune into the seasons and learn a few things along the way. Nature is full of educational opportunities and is an incredible source of curiosity.

## What you'll need

- Source or create a nature scavenger hunt list (use ours or create one best suited to your backyard/ natural space)
- Paper bags (can be picked up on the supermarket run or online)
- Print and cut out the lists, then glue to the bags.
- As an alternative to printing and gluing the lists, have your child write the list on the bag, perhaps even adding some extra ideas of their own.

## Get Started

If playing at a birthday party or as a family, this game does not need to be played by everyone at once, perhaps leave the bags in a basket, to be discovered in due course.

Once a few have started, the others will gradually join in.

This diffuses the competitive aspect, creating space for deeper observation and appreciation of the natural surrounds.



# Nature Scavenger Hunt

[TO CUT OUT AND PUT ON A BAG]

## Scavenger Hunt

- 1 A sunset-coloured leaf
- 2 A wand for a fairy
- 3 A chewed leaf
- 4 An interesting piece of bark
- 5 A seedpod or nut
- 6 4 different shaped leaves
- 7 A magical pebble or stone
- 8 A crown or hat for a small frog
- 9 3 different kinds of tiny flower
- 10 A feather the colour of your eyes
- 11 Something you think is special



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# Backyard and neighbourhood bird spotting

JASON TYNDALL

Watching birds can be relaxing and rewarding as we observe these feathered creatures going about their day-to-day lives. When we get to know the birds around us it provides an opportunity to tune into daily and seasonal rhythms that often guide their behaviour and movements.

Every day, sometimes unnoticed – birds are part of our lives. We hear them in the morning, occasionally during the day and again in the evening – their chorus of birdsong begins and concludes our days. But how much do we know about them? How many different types live in, or visit our backyards and neighbourhoods?

When we begin to explore the world of birds we can discover a new language and a new way of looking at nature. Some birds will sound their alarm when they see cats, others will chase smaller birds away, and whilst many build nests, there are also some that can't breed without trees that are more than a hundred years old. Let your bird watching journey begin!

## What you'll need

- Patience
- Somewhere to sit
- A method to recognise birds ([such as this free downloadable poster](#))

## Optional

- A bird ID book or APP
- Binoculars
- Nature journal or notepad.

## Steps

- 1 Have a look at the backyard bird checklist (page 43 of this guide) or find a local bird list online
- 2 On your downloadable poster, ID book or app look to see what birds you recognise or haven't seen before
- 3 Either in the morning or afternoon, find a comfortable place to sit in your backyard (or by the window if you don't have a backyard) and begin to take notice of the birds you are spotting. You can tick them off the list, nature journal about them or simply enjoy listening and watching)
- 4 Once you have spent a few sessions in your backyard – head out for a walk around the neighbourhood and see if you spot new birds or ones you haven't ticked off (be sure to check the relevant guidelines around social distancing and self-isolation).



# 10 backyard birds to find



New Holland Honeyeater  
black, yellow and white



Noisy Miner  
mostly grey with a yellow bill and black face



Rainbow Lorikeet  
blue head, orange, green and yellow body



Musk Lorikeet  
green with red around eye - mostly with rainbow lorikeets



Adelaide Rosella  
can be mostly red or yellow and green - has blue cheek patch



Australian Raven  
often mistaken for a crow



Red Wattlebird  
brown with orange belly



Galah  
pink and noisy



Crested Pigeon  
often sits on telephone wires



Magpie  
black and white

## Resources to help you identify and learn about birds:

Bird poster for [Bushland birds of Adelaide Hills](#)

Bird poster for [Birds of the Barossa Valley](#)

Bird poster for [Common urban birds across Adelaide](#)

Bird poster for [Birds of the Fleurieu Peninsula](#)

[BirdsSA](#) – an organisation that specialises in South Australian birds



*TENDING TO THE GARDEN*



Have a Grow:  
Gardening brings health,  
happiness and tomatoes

SOPHIE THOMSON



So much of our time and energy as parents is focused on our children's physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. With growing data sets that show increases in childhood obesity, depression and mental illness, it seems to me that we should be looking for ways to encourage wellbeing wherever possible.

As an obsessive-compulsive gardener, I know I'm biased, but I genuinely believe gardening is the solution to everything from our own personal health and wellbeing, to that of our family and loved ones. When kids are young, they will naturally copy what you do, so if you spend time outside in the garden, they will too. They will want to be involved and help with fun activities like planting and sowing, and while they may not have the persistence to stick with your task the whole time, just having them outside with you is beneficial. Unstructured free play is very important for development, and if you are outside doing your thing, they can be outside doing theirs.

Great components of a backyard for kids are shade for cool summer play; lawn for soft fun; a sandpit for hours of entertainment; balancing logs and stepping stones for motor skills, agility and balance; habitat for backyard wildlife; a veggie patch and fruit trees; and, interesting child friendly plants. If you're not a gardener, but want to know what all the fuss is about, give it a go. Get your kids to give you a hand and have

input. For kids, connecting with nature and learning to grow their own food is sowing a seed for their future health, wellbeing and happiness, and the future health of the planet.

Start small with something you and your kids are interested in – perhaps it's having your own fresh herbs, growing salad greens, making herbal teas, attracting birds or butterflies to your backyard, or growing flowers to pick for inside.

For those who are feeling busy and time poor, it can help to look at where your time is being spent. Many parents are usually so busy running their young kids from one organised activity to the other, that neither they, nor their kids are getting any downtime. Unstructured free time outside is just as important as activities such as sport. Screens also chew up a lot of time, and becoming aware of the hours lost each day to television, computers, or other devices, will help you determine for your family whether something may need to change.

## The benefits of gardening

There are numerous studies which show the benefits of gardening fall into four main areas: exercise, relaxation, physical and mental health, and optimal nutrition when we grow some of our own organic herbs, fruits and veggies.

### EXERCISE

Gardening is great exercise. It works all of the major muscle groups, improves strength and endurance, and increases mobility and flexibility. With approximately 25 per cent of Australian children classified as overweight or obese – a statistic linked to an increase in screen time and the resultant decrease in outside activity – any ‘green time’ (time spent outdoors) should be encouraged.

### RELAXATION

We all get stressed and look for ways to relax, but more children are describing themselves as stressed than ever before. As children are using social media at a younger age, it's important to consider ways to balance the potential negative effects with more green time, rather than screen time.

Being outside in nature watching the birds, bees and butterflies flit from flower-to-flower helps reduce our stress levels and make us feel more positive.

A growing body of research shows that gardening helps us to avoid mental health issues like depression and anxiety by dealing with stress before it becomes an issue, and if there is an issue, gardening is a great way to treat it.

### HEALTH

The physical health benefits of gardening include reduced risk of obesity and myopia and improved recovery from certain medical conditions. Gardening has also been shown to enhance intellectual development in children, including creativity and imagination, as well as improved academic performance. Numerous studies have also highlighted other benefits of being outside in nature, or in a garden, such as increased confidence and self-esteem, reduced stress levels, reduced depression, and reduced symptoms and severity of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD).

### NUTRITION

Gardening can put you and your family on the road to eating well. Growing food in your garden is not only a lot of fun, it also provides you with a healthy source of inexpensive, fresh, nutrient-dense seasonal produce.

And when you grow it yourself, food miles become food metres. It teaches you and your children about the seasons and helps eliminate the expectation that every fruit and vegetable should be available all year round. Kids are also much more likely to eat produce or try new things when they are involved in the growing.



*Sophie lives in the Adelaide Hills and is a mum to five children. She is a passionate gardener, presenter, author and Nature Play SA's ambassador.*



# 6 tips on starting a veggie patch

JASON TYNDALL

There's nothing quite like homegrown produce. The smell of freshly picked tomatoes, the crunch of newly podded peas and the anticipation of pulling your first carrot or beetroot from the soil. Whilst there is some work involved – gardening is a journey of trial and error, nurture and nourishment.

Here are five ways to get you prepared and excited about gardening:

- 1 Select the right veggie patch that suits your space (from pots to raised garden beds there are plenty of options)
- 2 Make sure your patch is in a nice sunny position, sheltered from strong winds
- 3 Prepare your soil with good quality compost and for extra nutrients add some aged horse or cow manure
- 4 If just starting out, choose fast-growing reliable veggies that you like to eat (a combination of herbs, leafy greens, root-based veggies, and those that produce vegetables from a flower i.e. tomatoes and zucchinis)
- 5 Water your veggies regularly
- 6 Tend to your garden with joy and it will teach you many things.





## Choosing the right veggie patch

NARRAH ZOLLO

Veggie patches don't have to be expensive, in fact you can start one with a low budget. And there are savings from growing your own produce – not to mention the health benefits, learning opportunities, sustainability, and having a sense of accomplishment and joy. Here are some affordable ideas to get you started with your very own patch of goodness.

In-ground beds are a great place to start. Find yourself a patch of dirt that gets morning sun, has a bit of shelter from strong winds and easy access to water. Even better if you can see your patch from a window so you can keep an eye on it.

Good soil sets you up for veggie success. When you've decided on your spot, dig a hole about as big as your head, bring up a handful of loose soil and consider what you see...

If the dirt is dark, damp and crumbly with a couple of earthworms, you're in luck. You can probably plant straight into it. Any other type of soil will benefit from the addition of a few spadefuls of compost and/or well-rotted animal manure (horse, chook and cow manure are great). If you don't have these on hand, make your own compost hole with veggie scraps, tea and coffee grindings and deciduous leaf litter. In about a month you can plant straight over the top of your compost hole and your plants will have a great food supply for their roots.

## Pots

Pots come in all shapes and sizes with different water holding capacities and drainage properties.

Some are self-watering and don't need a lot of upkeep (great for indoors) while others are free draining and dry out quickly (think terracotta and half wine barrels). If you don't have access to purpose-built plant pots, use your imagination and try what you have to hand. Empty yoghurt and ice cream containers, foam boxes, even gumboots work just as well. Just remember to make a few drainage holes on the bottom so your plants don't get wet feet.

Use premium potting soil in pots to give your plants the best chance to thrive in a contained environment. Apply a liquid seaweed fertiliser once a month to keep your plants happily fed and free of disease. If you don't have a liquid fertiliser you can make your own with a very weak solution of tea or coffee or try making your own compost tea.

Most pots do well in dappled outdoor sunshine rather than direct light.

## No dig garden bed

If your soil is really hard or sandy and you are able to visit a hardware / fodder store for supplies, a no dig bed, could be the way to go.

YOU WILL NEED: NEWSPAPER; LUCERNE HAY; HORSE, COW OR CHOOK MANURE; COMPOST; AND PEA STRAW

Begin by:

- Laying out newspaper three sheets thick over the space you have set aside for your plot. Wet thoroughly
- Follow this with a layer of lucerne hay about 15cm thick
- Next, add manure and/or compost to about 10cm thick
- Follow this with a 10cm layer of pea straw, then another manure or compost layer, and finish with 10cm of pea straw
- Water it in really well and leave to sit for about a month
- When you are ready to plant, dig a hole in the bed, fill it with compost and plant straight in.

## Vertical gardens

For those with limited space, vertical garden beds can be an effective way of growing hardy herbs or succulents. There are many designs for vertical gardens using an assortment of materials from old milk bottles to upcycled pallets and handmade wooden pyramids. Whatever you choose, find a spot out of direct sun, use premium quality potting mix and feed monthly with a seaweed liquid fertiliser.

You will need to give vertical gardens a bit more attention than other plots. Keep yours where you can see it, so you remember to visit.



## Raised garden beds

For those with a little more time and enthusiasm for DIY, a raised garden bed with good quality organic soil is one of the easiest mediums in which to grow herbs and veggies successfully.

Raised beds keep soil warmer (essential for growing in the cooler months), have better drainage capabilities and are easy to maintain. They also make a great looking feature in your garden. Ready-made beds can be purchased at local hardware stores but be mindful that during the summer months hot tin can put stress on delicate root systems. Other options are untreated wooden planks, which can be replaced individually over time, second hand bricks, log rounds, cinder blocks, even large stones if you have them.

Raised beds love the sunshine but will need some shade during our hot dry summers. 50% UV shade cloth significantly reduces water consumption and can be rigged up on a simple frame with wooden stakes or polypipe arcs. Try handing this project over to your children, you may be surprised by their ingenuity

## Mulching

All garden beds and pots benefit from a good mulch layer in dry, windy months to keep the soil moist and nutrients in.

If you don't have access to a mulcher you can make a modest amount of mulch with your leaf litter by running over a pile of leaves with your lawn mower. Pea straw or Lucerne hay is great for large plots as it feeds the soil while it breaks down. Rehydrated coconut coir (blocks available from hardware stores) is an effective mulch layer in pots that looks great and stores its weight in water.

During the winter months remove your mulch layers and place them in a compost bin or hole in your garden. This allows winter sunshine to warm the soil and dry out any excessive moisture.





# 3 easy ways to DIY seedling pots

CLAIRE LOCK

Use simple everyday materials to enjoy slow time as a family, whilst sowing the beginnings - or new additions - to your home or balcony garden.

Many of us are channelling our inner resourcefulness now as daily life changes, circumstances shift, and we spend more time at home. Creating seedling pots is a small positive action we can take with loved ones, using items found around the home.

Not only does crafting pots take the family outdoors for fresh air and relaxation, it enables problem solving, creative thinking, and use of numeracy, literacy and fine motor skills. Learning about plant growth, food, and sustainability is also embedded in this activity. Certainly, nothing beats the joy of discovering the first seedling emerge and your efforts bear fruit (or should we say veggies?).

## What you'll need

Choose to make your seedling pots from egg cartons, toilet rolls or newspaper, depending on what you have at home.

- Good quality potting mix (or soil)
- Seeds (e.g. lettuce, seasonal herbs and easy-to-grow veggies)
- Clean empty food tin (or a cup or jar)
- Stapler
- Egg cartons
- Toilet rolls
- Scissors

## Steps

### NEWSPAPER POTS

- 1 Take a sheet of newspaper and fold it in halves (longways)
- 2 Lay the tin can at the top left end of the folded newspaper (have the open end of the can at the top and base at the bottom, leaving a few inches of paper below)
- 3 Fold the paper at the base up against the can. Continue slowly rolling the can and folding the paper, until wrapped around completely and a based has formed. (Tip: fold loosely enough so you can slide the can out)
- 4 Gently slide the can out of the paper, leaving a newspaper pot. You may like to fold the top few centimetres into the middle to make it stronger.
- 5 Add a staple to secure the end of the rolled paper to the pot.



### TOILET ROLL POTS

- 1 Create four fold lines in the toilet roll by flattening the roll then folding it in half lengthways. The roll will now have a squarer shape. You can cut the roll in half at this point to create two small pots or leave for a taller pot
- 2 Using the scissors, cut four lines into the fold lines (about 1/3 of the roll)
- 3 Turn the four pieces in, tucking the final piece under the first to secure the base.

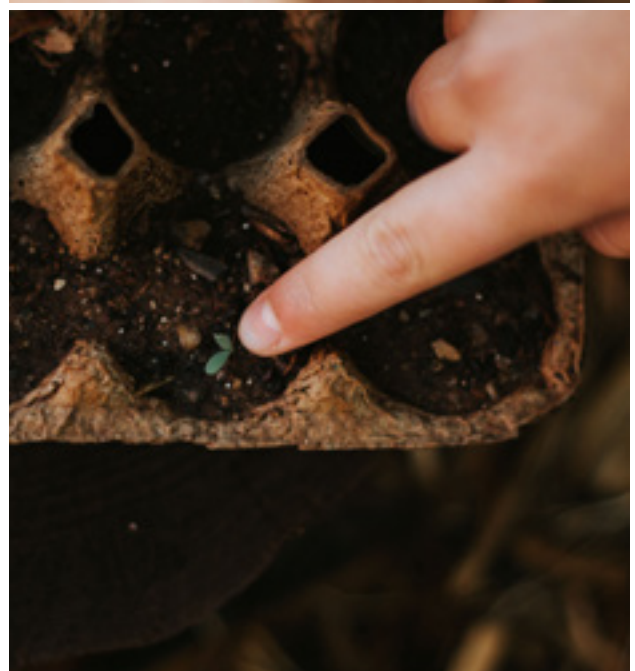


### EGG CARTONS

- 1 Place clean empty egg cartons on a flat surface outside.

### TO PLANT

- 1 Carefully fill your 2/3 of the pots with potting mix or soil from the garden
- 2 Gently place a couple of seeds into the pots then sprinkle soil on top to cover the seeds
- 3 Place pots into a tray and lightly water
- 4 When your seedlings have grown, plant the whole pot into their new home (vegetable garden or balcony pot). The newspaper, egg carton or toilet rolls will biodegrade naturally in the soil over time.



# Easy things to grow and when to plant them

A guide to sowing seeds in the Adelaide region

NARRAH ZOLLO



Vegetable	When to sow seeds	Plant with
Carrots	All year except winter months	Onions, leeks, lettuce, sage, peas, radishes, tomatoes, beans, celery, rosemary
Radish	All year round	Lettuce, leeks, spinach, strawberries, tomatoes
Beetroot	All months except May and June	Onions, silverbeet, lettuce, cabbage, dwarf beans, dill, peas
Spinach	February to June Seedlings July to March	Broad beans, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, eggplant (aubergine), onion, peas, strawberry
Silverbeet	July to March Seedlings August to May	Beans, cabbage, cauliflower tomato, onion, garlic, chives, lavender, parsnip
Lettuce	September to May	Carrots, onions, beets, cabbage, cauliflower, kale radish, leeks.
Strawberries	Seedlings May to July	Like their own bed with plenty of sunshine and airflow
Pumpkin	September to December	Sweet corn
Spring onions	Seedlings August to November	Carrots, beets, silverbeet, lettuce
Broad Beans	March to June	Potatoes
Snow peas	April to September	Carrots, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, kale
Tomatoes	August to September Seedlings October to December	Asparagus, carrot, celery, chives, parsley, marigold, basil
Zucchini	Seedlings November to January	Corn, beans, nasturtiums, parsley, silverbeet, tomatoes
Garlic	Sow cloves April to June	Beets, carrots, cucumbers, dill, tomatoes, parsnips
Chilli	October to December	Like their own bed with sunlight and fresh air.





# Homegrown Tomatoes

SOPHIE THOMSON

If ever there was just one fruit (or vegetable) to prove a case for the ‘grow your own’ movement, it’s the tomato. The only way to know what a real tomato tastes and smells like is to eat one you grew yourself.

No longer just the classic large red fruit, tomatoes come in a range of shapes, sizes and colours – from classic tomato red to orange, yellow, green and almost black. And in the right position, they fruit from December to June. They’re also rewarding for kids to grow, offering something they can help themselves to in the garden and enjoy the process of preparing and eating, whether raw or cooked.

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT POSITION

Tomatoes can be grown in the ground or in a pot, and most varieties require support to produce. As a general rule they require full sun. In hot dry climates however, they may do better with some extra protection from

shade cloth over the harshest summer months. And while they like good air circulation, they should be grown in a sheltered position protected from strong winds. They require well-drained, fertile soil prepared with organic matter in the form of compost and aged animal manures.

Crop rotation is essential so do not plant them in the same bed where tomatoes, eggplants, capsicum – any member of the Solanaceae family – grew within the last three years.

## CHOOSING A VARIETY

For beginners, cherry tomatoes are the easiest to grow. Otherwise, work out whether you can grow tall climbing



varieties (they will require strong stakes or a sturdy trellis for support). For early crops and salads, you can't go past large cherry tomato varieties like the flavoursome Tommy Toe and the yellows, like Yellow Pear. Personally I'm a fan of the large beefsteak types such as Mortgage Lifter. For something different try green tomatoes, like Green Zebra or Tigerella. Or if space is limited there are some great dwarf varieties, such as Patio.

## How to Grow

- 1 Seeds are best sown early in August in individual cell punnets or jiffy pots, around 6-8 weeks before you plan to plant. You may also choose to purchase seedlings
- 2 Seed trays should be kept in a warm sheltered spot such as a mini hothouse or north-facing windowsill inside
- 3 When the soil temperature reaches around 16°C, seedlings can be planted into your prepared plot or pot (usually October in Adelaide and early November in the Adelaide Hills)
- 4 Plant your seedlings deeper than their existing soil level, making sure to cover at least the first leaf node with soil
- 5 Use seaweed based plant tonics throughout their growing period as it keeps the plants in optimal health and reduces pest and disease problems.

## PESTS AND DISEASES

As the weather heats up, keep an eye on the lower leaves of your tomatoes. If they start to become dull brown and papery, the fruit may be exposed and open to sunburn, and eventually the whole plant can die. This is caused by tomato russet mite, which loves dry dusty conditions. Make sure that the soil under your plants is not exposed to the sun by mulching with straw based mulch. Spraying water under the foliage may also help to reduce mite numbers, however if the problem persists, use a spray of Eco-oil following the manufacturer's instructions.

## INTERESTING FACT

Tomatoes (and other members of the Solanaceae family such as eggplants, capsicums and chillis) benefit from buzz pollination from our native Blue-banded Bee.







# Homegrown Carrots

JASON TYNDALL

The humble carrot is often a childhood favourite, its sweet taste favoured over the greens pushed to one side of the plate. They're familiar, reliable and offer a true seed to table experience, helping young minds to understand where their food comes from.

Carrots prefer to be grown from seed. While planting seedlings is an option, carrot roots don't like to be disturbed, so sowing seeds where you plan to grow them is often best. Seeds can be sown from July through to March.

- 1 Select a sunny spot in your garden to sow the seeds
- 2 Turn over the soil so it's nice and loose and free of rocks. Carrots don't like too much compost, so add small amounts and dig it in well
- 3 Dig shallow rows, approximately 5mm deep and 15cm apart
- 4 Sprinkle the fine seeds in sparingly and gently cover with soil
- 5 Water lightly with a soft spray everyday until your seedlings begin to appear (2-3 weeks). From then, watering can be reduced to 2-3 times per week depending on rainfall
- 6 When seedlings are about 5cm high, pull excess seedlings out so that those remaining are approximately 10cm apart, allowing your carrots to grow thick and crunchy
- 7 Harvest from 12 weeks for smaller carrots and up to 18 weeks when they are fully mature.



### COMPANION PLANTS

Companion plants help attract beneficial insects while deterring the not-so-good ones. They can also help with shading, soil health and the overall quality of your veggies. Those known to help carrots grow include onions, leek, lettuce, sage, peas, radish, tomatoes, beans, celery, and rosemary. Plants to avoid include parsnip, beetroot, dill, brassicas and fennel.

### TIP FOR SUCCESS

Aphids are tiny insects that can damage carrots, as well as other veggies and plants in your garden, however, there's a natural way to help control them. You would usually pick carrots within the first 18 weeks, but by letting a few flower, it can attract ladybirds. Interestingly, the larvae of ladybirds feed on aphids. Other plants in the Apiaceae family (to which the carrot belongs) can also attract ladybird larvae including celery and coriander.

## Carrot and coriander dip

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 carrots
- 5-6 leaves of fresh coriander
- 1 tsp of olive oil
- ¼ tsp ground cumin (optional)
- 1 tsp of lemon or lime juice
- 1 garlic clove
- Salt and pepper to taste.

### METHOD

- 1 Wash your freshly picked carrots
- 2 Boil or steam the carrots
- 3 Once cool, put all ingredients in a food processor and blend
- 4 Serve with cucumber and celery sticks or pita bread.



# Homegrown Greens

SOPHIE THOMSON



## English Spinach

This dark green leafy vegetable is renowned for its high iron content and is great for growing bodies. Versatile in the kitchen, young leaves of baby spinach are tender and delicious in salads, while taller forms are perfect to add to a green juice or steamed as a side vegetable.

Seeds can be sown from February to June. Seedlings can be planted from July to March.

- 1 Choose a sunny, well-drained bed with good drainage to sow your seeds/plant seedlings
- 2 Turn over your soil and dig in quality organic mix to make the soil rich and fertile
- 3 Dig shallow rows, approximately 1cm deep and 30cm apart
- 4 Sprinkle the seeds in sparingly, gently cover with soil and water well
- 5 Water regularly, particularly in warmer weather, or the plants may bolt (grow too fast and set seed)
- 6 Once seedlings begin to grow (2-3 weeks), pull excess seedlings out to use as baby spinach so that those remaining are 20cm apart
- 7 Plants will be fully grown in 8-10 weeks reaching around 25cm high. Harvest the largest leaves first, using a knife or scissors to avoid removing the whole plant.

### TIP FOR SUCCESS

Keep picking the outside leaves to promote growth. If there is excess, slightly blanch and freeze for use later on. If your spinach looks as if it is going to flower, cut the 'spikes' back so the energy goes into growing foliage.

### Nut-free spinach pesto

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups of baby spinach leaves
- ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tbsp of olive oil
- 2 tbsp sunflower seeds
- Pinch of salt.

#### METHOD

- 1 Pick and wash your spinach
- 2 Blend all ingredients in a food processor until smooth
- 3 Serve with crudité's, stir through pasta or scrambled eggs
- 4 To make dairy free add miso paste, nutritional yeast, or dairy-free cheese.

*Recipe submitted by Monina Gilbey*



## Silverbeet / Swiss Chard

Often confused with spinach, this dark green leafy vegetable has crinkly leaves and prominent white midribs. There are also forms with coloured midribs in shades of red, pink, orange and gold called rainbow chard, visually appealing to adults and kids alike.

Unlike spinach, this is a 'cut and come again' vegetable which forms a clump to 60cm high. Plants will usually remain productive for twelve to eighteen months. Seeds can be sown from July to March and seedlings planted August to May.

- 1 Choose a sunny, well-drained bed with good drainage to sow your seeds/ plant seedlings
- 2 Turn over your soil and dig in quality organic mix to make the soil rich and fertile
- 3 Sow seeds in clumps 25-30cm apart and water them well
- 4 Once seedlings begin to grow, remove all but the strongest seedling
- 5 Water regularly, particularly in warmer weather as the plants may bolt (grow too fast and set seed)
- 6 Harvest begins after about 8 weeks. Take the outside leaves first, twisting and pulling them off from the base. Always leave at least 6 leaves in the centre as it will keep producing for many months to come.

### TIP FOR SUCCESS

Mulching will help to keep your plants moist and free of weeds. Try using a light layer of pea straw, as it can prevent soil splashing onto your leaves. To promote growth, remove old leaves – they make great chook food, giving eggs deep yellow yolks.

## Silverbeet Frittatta

### INGREDIENTS

- 4-5 large silverbeet leaves, mid-rib removed and leaves diced
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 small red onion
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2/3 cup grated cheddar cheese
- 6 eggs, lightly beaten
- Salt and pepper.

### METHOD

- 1 Preheat oven to 180°C
- 2 Heat an oven proof frying pan over low heat and warm the olive oil
- 3 Add garlic and onion to pan and sauté for 2-3 minutes
- 4 Add silverbeet leaves and sauté until wilted
- 5 Combine cheese with the eggs, pour into the frypan and season with salt and pepper
- 6 Cook on low heat until it begins to set, then transfer to the oven for 15 minutes or until cooked through.

*Recipe submitted by Michelle Tyndall*



blue banded  
kee

blue banded  
kee



**ART AND CRAFT**



# Lavender Playdough

CLAIRE LOCK

Lavender playdough is as calming as it is engaging. The natural colours and fragrance captivate the senses. It's the perfect afternoon activity.

Creating lavender playdough for your family is the destination, but there's equal enjoyment to be had in the journey. There's something special about spending time together collecting lavender and loose parts, before working together on the recipes.

Playing with playdough involves fine motor skills, enhances sensory development, promotes creativity and the cooking process can also support numeracy and literacy. It's invaluable to have a batch of homemade playdough on-hand for sustained indoor play, with an element of nature, further enhanced with the use of loose parts, such as seedpods, cones, flowers, pebbles, leaves, twigs and shells.

## What you'll need

- 2 cups of plain flour
- 4 tbsp cream of tartar
- 1 cup of salt
- 2 cups boiling water
- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 tsp lavender oil.

## Optional extras

- ½ - 1 cup fresh or frozen berries for dyeing
- Handful of fresh or dried lavender sprigs, pulled apart or chopped
- Natural loose parts for play (try twigs, flowers, seed pods and cones)
- Cookie cutters, rolling pin, cutting board or placemat.



## Steps for basic lavender playdough

- 1 Allow children to measure and mix the flour, salt and cream of tartar in a medium-sized saucepan
- 2 Place saucepan on medium heat and carefully add boiling water and oil (while you're doing this your nature players can ready the lavender sprigs). Stir for 3-5 minutes until the mixture congeals then remove from heat
- 3 Once playdough has cooled, knead the lavender oil into the dough for your nature players to work their fresh or dried lavender into the mixture.



## Wild berry variation

There's a bounty of natural hues that can be achieved with berries and other plants, spices and natural materials. For this recipe, you can experiment with foraged summer berries (for example blackberries or mulberries), fresh or frozen store-bought berries. Play with different quantities and simmering times to see what unique shades of purple you can produce.

Follow the steps in the basic playdough recipe, but substitute the boiling water for the natural dye mix and omit the dried lavender.

To prepare your natural dye, gently bring the water and berries to boil in a saucepan, then simmer for five minutes (longer if you wish). Remove the saucepan from the stove and strain the mixture through a colander, reserving the liquid.







# Egg Dyeing

XAN HOLYOAK

We've all got a few tired veggies hiding away in the fridge, haven't we? Before you head to the compost bin, why not bring a little extra Dr Seuss into your child's day and have Green Eggs and Ham come to life? You can skip the ham of course, and bring a whole rainbow of eggs to the table instead. This activity will enchant both adult and child alike, plus support healthy eating choices, as these eggs are completely safe for consumption.

Many everyday vegetables impart a wonderful spectrum of natural colour and using them to dye hardboiled eggs will encourage your child's curiosity while allowing their sense of nature's wonder to flourish.

To be enjoyed over two days, this project is an observation of time and patience. With so much room for experimentation you can truly immerse yourself in the process, giving you and your child the opportunity and freedom to play.

## What you'll need

- 1 Dozen eggs. Both brown-shelled and white-shelled eggs work, although offer different results
- 1/4 purple cabbage
- 3 red onions
- 3 brown onions
- 2-3 medium sized beetroots
- 2-4 tbs turmeric powder
- Approx. 10 tbs of house-hold white vinegar.

## Gather

- 1 large stainless steel strainer
- 1 measuring cup
- 1 tbs measuring spoon
- 1 large spoon
- A pot with a lid for each variety of vegetable (i.e. each colour)
- 1 large glass or stainless steel bowl (avoid plastic or ceramic as they may stain)
- A couple of rags or dish cloths
- Cutting board/s
- Kitchen knives (optional grater)
- Newspaper or old towels for protecting your work surface
- Wire baking rack on which to place dyed eggs for drying (with something underneath for catching drips – you can use a baking tray but towel or newspaper is fine)
- Recycled glass jars with lids – large enough to hold 2 eggs and dye liquid comfortably
- Sticky labels and/or marker pen.

## Prepare

### EGGS

These can be hardboiled separately in advance OR done so in the boiling water of the dye pot whilst extracting your colour. If choosing this option, remember to remove the eggs after their cooking time and not to leave them for the full dye bath preparation or you risk overcooking and cracking their shells.

### YOUR WORK SURFACE

Vegetable dyes are powerful colourants so you may wish to cover your kitchen bench with newspaper or an old towel to minimise stains. This activity can get messy with lots of washing up! Relax and enjoy the process with your child, the results are worth it!

### JARS

When your hardboiled eggs are ready you will place 2 inside each clean jar and set aside with lids. Make sure your labels are ready before you start to avoid any mix ups.

### A SPACE

Clear a space in your fridge to house your jars while eggs soak overnight.

### YOUR DYES

Using one pot per variety of vegetable, follow instructions to create your dye base.

*Tip: These instructions are for 2-4 eggs per dye bath. If you are colouring all your eggs the same or if working with a group of children, you will need to adjust quantities accordingly.*



## Steps for creating your dye bases

- 1 Chop, shred, grate or peel your vegetable. Place in separate pots with water using an approximate 1:1 ratio, for example 1 cup of chopped vegies to 1 cup of water. For onions, it is the skin that holds the dye so be sure to use this part. It is fine to include a little flesh as well. For ground turmeric, use approximately 2 tbs per 1 cup of water. Stir over heat until relatively dissolved. Avoid letting it boil
- 2 Place pot on stove and bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce to a simmer (add raw eggs if not preparing earlier), and continue to simmer for approximately 20 minutes (remembering to remove eggs after their cooking time)
- 3 After simmering, remove pot from heat and set aside while it cools a little
- 4 Once cooled, set your colander inside your bowl and place both into your sink. Pour entire contents (veg and water) into your colander. Once drained, your vegetable matter can be composted, leaving your strained coloured water in the bowl and ready for the next step
- 5 Using the 1:1 ratio, pour 1 tbs of white vinegar for every 1 cup of coloured water into your jars. Place two with eggs and completely cover
- 6 Clearly label your jars so you know which vegetable was used for which dye and secure lid in place
- 7 Place jars into fridge and allow the eggs to soak in their dye baths overnight, or longer for more depth of colour.

## Discover

When you are ready, retrieve the jars from the fridge and place next to your prepared baking rack.

When eggs are wet, the colour will scratch very easily. Using a spoon, carefully remove each egg and place it on the rack to dry.

At this stage you have the choice to either allow for your eggs to dry, enabling the dye to set. Or, you can rinse them under cool water, gently rubbing away the top surface of dye and revealing the softer tone beneath. The same result can be achieved with a damp cloth. Do not be concerned about the powdery residue on the turmeric dyed eggs, simply rinse your egg or wipe it off with a soft cloth once it has dried.

*TIP: Keep a mix of tones, washing some and leaving others with the stronger pigment.*

*Note: Caution should be taken with this activity as it involves boiling water and working with a stove.*





# Nature Weaving

CLAIRE LOCK

The ancient art of weaving has seen a modern resurgence as an accessible and meditative pastime for little folk, mamas and families alike.

Weaving can take many forms, with differing techniques used to create functional and decorative items such as basketry, textiles and home décor, like wall hangings. Natural materials used in weaving can include wool, grasses, cotton and an abundance of other plant fibres, making this a tactile and creative way for children to connect with nature and express themselves through art.

Creating a woven nature hanging invites quality family time through foraging for materials, and sitting down to create together. This activity not only engages the tactile senses, but also the fine motor skills, through actions such as cutting, collecting, binding, warping and weaving.

## What you'll need

- Collection of similar size sticks, at least 0.5–1cm thick
- Wool or thick cotton, such as embroidery thread
- Scissors
- Natural loose parts such as seasonal plant cuttings, bark, feathers and flowers.

## Steps for your nature weaving

- 1 Collect your natural materials from your garden or local area. Some plants will be suited to 'ephemeral' or temporary creations, while others can dry out to create long lasting creations. Plants that dry and weave well are lavender and natives including Knobby Club Rush, Flax-Lilies, Flat Sedges, Grass Tree leaves and Common Everlastings
- 2 Make your nature loom (frame). This will form the basis of your woven nature hanging and hold the 'warp' (vertical threads) you will weave into. To make a square or rectangular loom gather four sticks of roughly the same thickness. Use the wool or cotton to 'lash' (tie) the sticks together in the four corners until they hold firm
- 3 Warp your loom to create tension and a framework for weaving. Tie an end of wool or thick cotton around the bottom left corner of your stick frame before drawing it up and around the top stick. Wrap it around the top stick twice to help hold it securely before bringing the warp thread back down to the bottom stick. Wrap around the bottom stick twice then continue the process until you reach the end of the frame. Tie your warp thread to the end of the stick, keeping the tension in place
- 4 Get your weave on. You're now ready to weave your collected natural treasures. Let your children experiment with their natural materials, working them over and under the warp threads to create their own unique weaving
- 5 Hang your creation in a special spot by attaching some wool to your weaving loom.

*Want to experiment with other sustainably sourced materials? Try cutting strips from old clothing or visit your local op shop for secondhand yarns when social distancing guidelines allow.*





# Lavender Sachets

XAN HOLYOAK

There's something special about making things by hand, creating a one of a kind piece with its own personality, quirks and characteristics.

Craft activities using sensory materials offer a welcome opportunity to slow down and share quiet time with children. While sewing may not be as common as it once was, its benefits have stood the test of time. Needlework develops dexterity, encourages creativity, supports mindfulness and delivers a sense of pride and fulfilment in learning something new.

Lavender sachets are simple to create and can be used to deter pantry moths, encourage relaxation and restful sleep or to delicately scent your wardrobe.

If you don't have a lavender bush in your yard, explore your neighbourhood, including local parks and gardens. Cut the flowers at the base of the stem and dry them in the sun.

## What you'll need

- Cotton fabric, up-cycled if possible
- Sewing needle with large eye
- Embroidery thread
- Chopped dried lavender flower (50g for three sachets)
- Small sewing scissors
- Fabric scissors
- Pinking shears
- Dressmaker pins
- Spoon or scoop for filling sachets
- Iron.

## Optional extras

- Additional embroidery thread for colour variations and/or embellishments
- Decorative buttons, ribbon or beads
- Other dried herbs.

## Steps for basic sachet using running stitch

- 1 Cut two square pieces of cotton fabric around 12cms each. With the squares together, printed sides facing out, iron your fabric and secure in the centre using a dressmaker pin
- 2 With your pinking shears, trim all four edges by about 1cm. The zigzag edge prevents fraying and your square will now have uniform sides and corners, ready for stitching
- 3 Thread your needle and meet the ends of your embroidery thread together to tie a knot, leaving a 2cm tail. Allowing a 1cm gap between your stitching and the zigzagged edge, begin to sew using running stitch
- 4 Once you have sewn three sides, knot your stitching and snip your needle free, or if there remains ample thread on your needle for completing the fourth side, then allow needle and thread to slacken while you fill your sachet
- 5 Remove your dressmaker pin and using the spoon, carefully fill the pocket with the dried lavender, packing it down as you go. Leave a 2cm space at the top
- 6 Taking up your needle again, continue with running stitch and sew your fourth side closed. Meet up with your starting stitch and knot. Snip thread leaving a little tail if desired and gently massage your sachet to evenly distribute the lavender.

### EMBELLISHMENTS

Add your own unique touch by experimenting with other stitching techniques. Blanket stitch works nicely along the edges and can be used instead of pinking shears. Embroidery adds a decorative finish to plain fabric or enhances areas of design within printed fabric. Buttons, beads and ribbon also create lovely effects. It's best to work these embellishments onto your squares before they are pinned together.





# Watercolour Painting

JESSICA ABELL

Painting with watercolour brings a sense of calm and opens up the world of colour for exploration and experimentation. It's something siblings and the family can enjoy together.

When starting watercolour with children you'll likely discover an exciting chapter of fascination and enquiry. It engages the senses and fosters creativity, immersing children in artistic expression. You'll see them boldly trying new things and learning through trial and error. Painting also develops fine motor skills and knowledge of form, space and colour.

Painting and fresh air were meant to be together, with outdoor workspaces providing endless inspiration. Children often draw ideas from nature, so even if painting indoors on a rainy day, elements of the natural world can still be explored. Watercolour paints can be purchased in pans or tubes. Pans are much easier to manage with children when you're first starting out.

## What you'll need

- Paintbrushes of different sizes and types
- Watercolour paints / watercolour pencils
- Archival sketchbook or watercolour papers
- Lead pencil and eraser
- Glass jars 2/3 full of clean water (2 per person makes it easier for water changes)
- Small ceramic dishes or palette for mixing colours and creating colour washes
- Natural loose parts for painting studies (try twigs, flowers, feathers, stones or shells).



## Optional extras

- Binder clips or removable tape to keep paper still when painting on windy days
- Flora and fauna field guides for referencing and extending knowledge
- Paper towel or tissues to wipe brushes and blot excess water
- Table salt for experimenting
- Waterproof felt-tipped pen for outlining drawings or adding details.

## Steps for basic watercolour painting

- 1 Select different types of watercolours to create with – tubes, pans, wheels and pencils
- 2 Choose a well-lit uncluttered space to work in
- 3 Lightly sketch what you plan to draw with a lead pencil and outline the shapes and patterns. Younger children may prefer to jump straight into painting – that's okay too
- 4 With a slightly wet brush, wet the area before applying paint, or paint directly onto the paper to see the different effects. If you make a mistake, dab with water and use the tip of a tissue or paper towel to soak it up
- 5 Apply lighter colours first working your way up to darker ones
- 6 Add finer details after painting using watercolour pencils, either to the dry painting with a damp brush, or straight onto a slightly damp painting.

### EXPERIMENT WITH SALT

It can be fun to experiment with different techniques, and a simple one to try is the salt effect. Using table salt, you can create unique texture and pattern as the crystals absorb pigment and moisture. The best time to sprinkle salt over your painting is just as it's beginning to dry. Once your painting has dried, gently wipe away the salt with a tissue.





# Backyard Nature Memory Cards

JASON TYNDALL

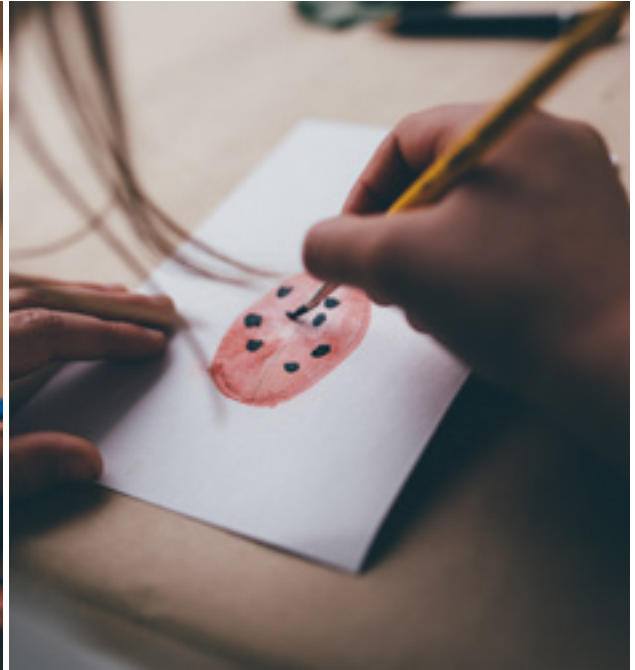
Playing games together can bring so much joy to a family. Whether it's monopoly, snakes and ladders or a good old-fashioned game of memory. It can be even more rewarding if you've made the game yourself as it can be played for years to come.

Art can be a powerful form of mindfulness – as we paint or softly colour a sketch, we find a sense of calm. We have time to think. When done together as a family, we are absorbed with matters the most – a sense of togetherness. Of love. Of belonging.

Not only does nature-inspired art channel creativity but can also ignite imagination, curiosity and provide a thirst for knowledge. And when combined with a hand-crafted game for the whole family to enjoy – it creates an atmosphere of joy, laughter and pride.

## What you'll need

- 6 slightly thick x A4 sheets of paper (if painting, watercolour paper is preferable but not a necessity)
- Scissors
- Ruler and pencil
- Coloured pencils and/or watercolour paints
- Brushes
- String or ribbon.



## Steps for making your memory cards

- 1 Go for a wander in the backyard and collect, or be inspired by, nine natural things (or how ever many pairs you'd like to do)
- 2 Using your ruler, divide your six A4 pages into four and cut them (you should have 18 cards)
- 3 Draw or paint your natural items. They need to be drawn twice to create a pair. You can do this as a family (the results will be fun and different)
- 4 Write or find another create way to label your natural item (there are some great links to literacy)
- 5 On the rear of your cards, decide on a theme and devise a consistent pattern. Or as an optional step you can paint or draw a pattern on all six A4 pages before cutting them
- 6 Once finished tie them with string or ribbon to keep them together (or make your own box)
- 7 It's time to play!





# Nature Masks

BEC HALL

Mask making is an ideal activity to stimulate creativity and imagination. A mask allows the wearer to adopt a new identity with its own unique mannerisms and behaviours that draws out language, speech and make-believe play. The freedom and bravado evident in children who participate in this kind of play is as wonderful as the artistic creation of the mask itself.

Inspired by the wild colours and shapes of nature, children gather the decorations needed for their mask. The adult's role is that of the quiet observer; only offer to help (perhaps with gluing or tying string) if asked.

The design and placement should be done without adult interference, acknowledging the children as confident and creative artists.

Will your child become an animal? An alien? A mythical creature? Dramatic play develops confidence and social skills while stoking the fire of imagination.

By crafting outdoors instead of around the kitchen table, our children are inspired by the sounds, smells and sights of the natural world, creating more evocative and meaningful experiences.

## What you'll need

- A mask template to trace (or you can draw your own)
- Thin cardboard (for an environmentally sustainable option, use recycled cardboard such as those from cereal boxes)
- Scissors
- String
- Craft glue
- Paintbrush (for applying glue)
- Natural treasures (think leaves, feathers, twigs etc).

## Optional

- A basket (for collecting natural items)
- Colour pencils or paints (for extra decoration).

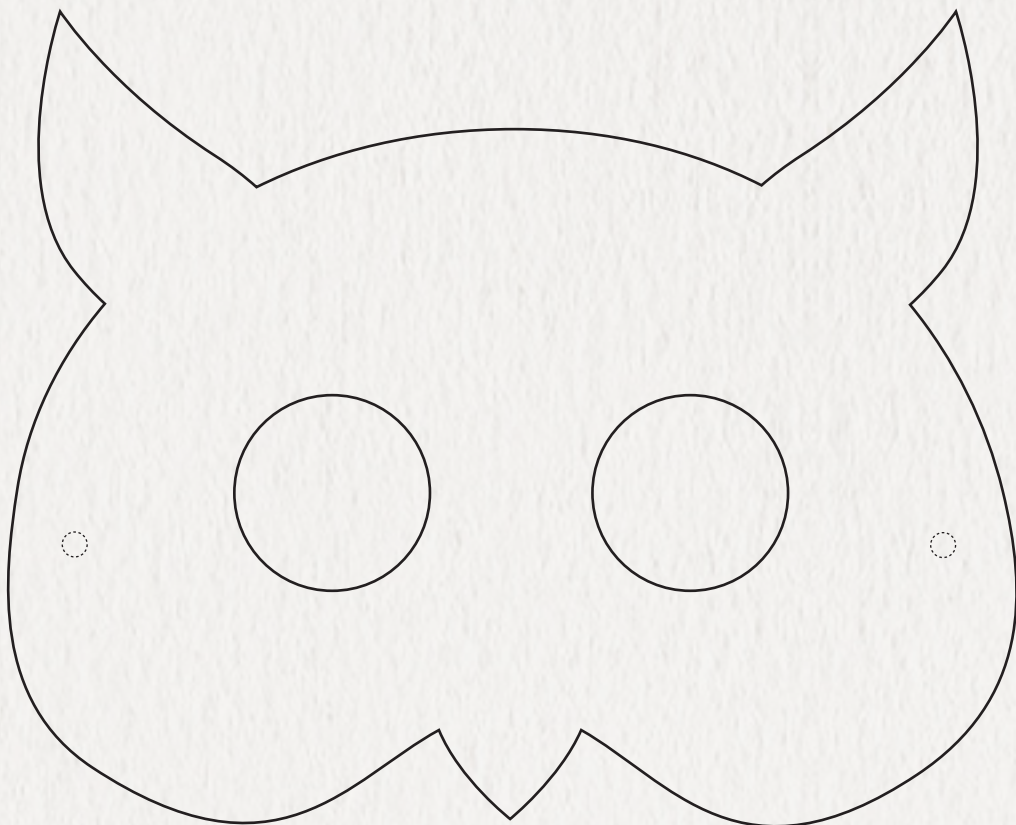
## Steps

- 1 Use a mask template, or draw your own onto cardboard
- 2 Cut the mask to shape including holes for the string.
- 3 Wander the backyard (or neighbourhood) to collect natural treasures
- 4 Gather paintbrushes, string and craft glue or PVA (pour a little glue into a section of an old egg-carton to make it more manageable for little hands).
- 5 Glue the decorations onto the mask and wait for it to dry (the hardest part).
- 6 Encourage the children to tie the string to one side and have them hold the mask in place while you measure and tie the second side
- 7 It's time to play!



# Nature mask template

[TO PRINT AND CUT OUT]





*INTO THE WILD*



# Go for a walk in nature

JASON TYNDALL

Walking amongst trees to the sound of birds and backdrop of hills or other natural landscape is one of the many calming rituals we introduce into our weekly, fortnightly or monthly family rhythm, particularly when our lives are compounded with stress and anxiety.

We are fortunate in South Australia to have such as a diverse and accessible network of National Parks, Botanic Gardens, Reservoirs and other natural open spaces for our bodies and our minds to retreat to. Research has indicated that just a 20-minute walk in nature can make a difference to the overall wellbeing of adults and children.

## What you'll need

- The internet to research your local nature patch or when suitable, a place a little more wild and remote
- Walking shoes/gumboots
- Sun protection/wet weather gear
- Water
- Healthy snacks

## Optional

- Picnic rug
- Nature journal
- Binoculars
- Field ID books

## Steps


- 1 Familiarise yourself with the Government's social-distancing guidelines before you set out
- 2 Select your nature location (it may be a close National Park, local nature reserve or clifftop trail)
- 3 Download or view a map of your selected location and choose a trail that suits your family
- 4 Hit the road
- 5 Once you get there, find your trail and let the kids lead the way
- 6 As you walk, put your devices away and just enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of nature.

## Supporting nature resources:

- [Bushland Birds poster](#), Natural Resources, Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges
- [Adelaide Hills Bird poster](#), Natural Resources, Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges
- [Adelaide butterflies poster](#), Natural Resources, Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges
- [Adelaide Hills Fungi poster](#) (relevant to many parts of SA), Natural Resources, Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges
- [Posters and information such as frogs, ants and orchids](#), Natural Resources, Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges
- [Find your closest National Park](#), National Parks and Wildlife SA
- [Find your closest reservoir](#), Reservoirs SA

Please keep updated at [SA Health](#) and the [Australian Government Department of Health](#) (or your relevant [state or territory](#)) particularly about [social distancing](#) and [self-isolation](#).





# Start a nature journal

JASON TYNDALL

Nature journaling has been a mindful activity for centuries by explorers, artists, naturalists and those that have delved in the natural world with pencil and paper.

For children, nature journaling is a fun and interesting way to reflect, record and illustratively depict what they have noticed, wondered and encountered. The great thing is there is no right or wrong way, no duration or frequency. It can be daily, weekly, monthly or as spontaneous as a butterfly that flutters into your backyard or across your path.

Keeping a nature journal can capture moments, thoughts and feelings that can be looked back on for many years to come. And it can help us develop and deepen our connection to nature – the birds will sound more beautiful than ever and the clouds will drift in slow motion – what better way for our minds to heal and find calm.

## What you'll need

- A5 or A4 notebook – preferably ring bound so it can sit flat when writing (if planning to do a lot of watercolour painting you can invest in watercolour paper)
- Sketch pencil + coloured pencils or watercolour paints and brushes
- Eraser + sharpener.

## Optional

- Glue stick
- Ruler
- Home printer
- Camera so images can be downloaded onto a computer and printed.

## Steps

- 1 Spend a morning/afternoon or whole day somewhere with nature. This could be your backyard or a patch of nature a little bit wilder
- 2 Take time to notice flowers, leaves, insects and other wildlife
- 3 If taking your nature journal with you to a wilder place, you can sketch and take notes of various things along the way – you can write how being in the wild makes you feel or any other thoughts that come into your mind. If needed you can add colour and other details once you are home
- 4 If at home, after a day of play and time spent together in the backyard, write about your experience, what you enjoyed doing or something you found or noticed (like birds calling, visiting butterflies, plants in flower)
- 5 If confined indoors – sit by a window where you can see trees or a part of nature, and write about the changes you see, the types of birds that visit, what the clouds are doing and how it all makes you feel.



# Meander along a quiet seashore

JASON TYNDALL

For many the ocean brings a sense of calm, beauty and freedom.

Watching the sunset as it fills the sky with an array of colour; walking barefoot along the shoreline and feeling the salty breeze on your face; and hearing the sound of the waves crash and recede are feelings that evoke relief, escape and a sense of calmness that our minds need particularly in challenging times.

Meandering along a quiet shoreline can bring reflection, discovery and curiosity. From seashells and seaweed to squid eggs and colourful sponges there are many new discoveries that await – and many questions to be asked (and possibly researched if your interest goes beyond a casual stroll).

## What you'll need

- Access to the weather forecast (as weather events such as lightning storms are best observed from afar or avoided)
- Sun/wet weather protection.

## Optional

- Nature journal
- Poster or guide to help identify your discoveries
- A flask of tea or hot chocolate.

## Steps

- 1 Head to your closest beach – or when the time is right venture to a new or more remote beach
- 2 Pick a point along the coast to walk and begin your stroll
- 3 If you brought along a warm drink and poster or guide – take some time to relax, take in the coastal scenery and identify what you've discovered
- 4 OR keep you coastal adventure spontaneous and see where the journey takes you!

## Further Resources

A family guide - [Adventures by the Sea](#), Nature Play SA

[A snorkeler's guide to plants and animals](#), Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources

[A beachcomber's guide to plants and animals in South Australia's Marine Parks](#), Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources

[Beachcombing ID chart](#) – Natural Resources, Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges

[Down by the Sea](#) – a nature and wellbeing guide that extends from Seacliff to Glenelg, City of Holdfast Bay.



## About Nature Play SA

Our vision is to inspire the South Australian community to engage children in nature through outdoor learning and play.

We're a not-for-profit organisation that started in 2014 with start-up funding from the South Australian Government. Our vision was simple – to get more children outside playing in nature. In their backyards, local parks and wilder places.

We have a passion for our children, and the children we engage, with strong beliefs that guide us both personally and professionally. We believe in family, community and the important role of adults have to play in connecting children with nature. And, it's our belief in childhood that sees our team determinedly working to re-establish nature as an important, and irreplaceable, part of children's lives.

Our start-up funding concluded in June 2018 and we've worked hard toward becoming entirely self-funded and continue to make great in-roads. This isn't something we've achieved, or can continue to achieve, on our own, but with the continued support of the Nature Play SA community we've grown since we began. And we are ever so thankful.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on our program as much of our revenue is through events, school visits and programs – all of which have been postponed for the time being. Our team is creative and innovative, and we are finding new ways to adapt, operate and support our communities during this pandemic. And with our loyal community and business partners we remain stronger and more committed than ever before – we are in this together.

## About The Department of Human Services

We would like to acknowledge our funding partner the Department of Human Services. Without their funding this guide would not have been possible. We value our partnership with their Parenting and Family Support Program team particularly their focus on guiding children's behaviour through staying connected to build strong parent-child relationships. Our shared understanding of the importance of helping parents build an understanding of child and adolescent development so that they can lay the strongest possible foundation for their children and young people means that our aims align and add value across our work. We would recommend the Team's workshops and webinars developed in SA for SA families for anyone looking for help with everyday parenting.

Contact the team via email [here](#), or by phone on 0439 086 314.



## Acknowledgements

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We would also like to acknowledge our supporters who over the years have engaged with us at our events, on social media, via email or other means. This continued and growing support is one of our most valued assets.

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