

BLÁTHÚ NEWSLETTER



An update for members and friends

Autumn 2022

Though much is changing, I stand strong
And in the darkness, shine.
For sleep, the plants and creatures long
But I have work divine.

For sun-seeds golden I'll be sowing,
Warmly from my heart's depth's glowing,
Into winter's icy flowing.

From *In the Light of a Child*, by M H Burton
(Third September week)

Welcome to the Autumn 2022 newsletter!

Yellow leaves, cobwebs laden with dew on misty mornings, an abundance of apples, and now the blackberries are beginning to look past their best. Hopefully you have gathered in and made the best of Nature's preserves; have a larder shelf laden with jams and jellies; harvested the elderberries and made the deep dark syrup that soothes a cold. Nature offers us so many delights.

I learned much from my mum, but it was my gran who taught me to make jam. I am twelve years old, in the enormous scullery kitchen of the old house where my grandparents were caretakers. A huge pot, brimful with red fruits, bubbles and steam rising, on a black range. We stir carefully; run a flat plate under the cold tap until it is thoroughly chilled; drop teaspoonfuls of hot, red, liquid

CONTENTS

Sense Stimulation	3
Stolen Focus	4
Digital Media for the Young	5
Still-Face	6
Facing the World in a Buggy	6
Face-to-Face	7
Conference 2022 - A Date for your Diary	9
Trees	10
For the Seasons - Nature Activities	11
For the Seasons - Yarrow	12
For the Seasons - Verses & Songs	14
For the Seasons - A Singing Game	16
For the Seasons - Autumn Song	17
Awareness of Toxic Plants	18
Recipe - Apricot Cake	18
Book Review	19

onto the plate; and watch to see if it wrinkles at is cools. That is how we'd know when it was ready to set.

It felt like an initiation into some ancient alchemical mysteries, and those scullery lessons in preserving have stayed with me, and enriched my life. I cannot pass wild fruit in a hedgerow without picturing, smelling, tasting the sweet thick jellies - the transformed matter - that could fill my larder.

Nature offers us so much more than these autumn fruits. It can help us to ground ourselves, something that nurtures us, especially when we find ourselves drawn into spending more and more time in front of a screen. We may tell ourselves, "Just another five minutes,"... but find that an hour has passed before we switch off, our bodies stiff, exhausted, our minds racing and unable to switch off.



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Oige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



It is helpful to establish a self-care practice when we work on screen; to be aware of ourselves as humans, with bodies, and of the tendency to lose ourselves into the dark enchantment of the virtual world; to take steps to preserve our selves, our souls.

We might even ask our little electronic friends to help us: set a timer to ring a gentle bell to remind you when an hour is up. Take a break, drink some water, stretch, breathe, go outside if you can, and stand on good solid earth. Remind yourself to do this regularly. Nature will willingly help you to re-root, and return to your self.

After a full day's work in the BLATHU office, the first thing I do when I get home is take off my shoes and socks, and walk around the garden. Come rain or shine, a few minutes with my bare feet on the ground restores me.

This is self-preservation, in conjunction with Nature. Be kind to yourself, try it and see if it helps.

In peace, Ruth

BLÁTHÚ National Co-ordinator

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NEWS

WELCOME to our new CEO: BLÁTHÚ's Board of Directors and Staff would like to welcome our newly appointed CEO, Donna Ní Bhaoil, to our team, and we wish you every success in your new role! We look forward to working with Donna.

CORE FUNDING: After years of campaigning, we finally have our first pay deal!

"Thousands of early years professionals will see a pay increase that will end poverty wages and set us on a path to professional pay and recognition." - Elaine Dunne, Federation of Early Childhood Providers.

As an organisation, one of BLÁTHÚ's key strategies is to represent our members on the national platform to change policy in the sector. Over 2021, our then-CEO, Fiona Coady, attended 5 workshops on the Core Funding Model panel. As part of her preparation, she worked with Veronica Crombie from Brigit's Hearth as an expert in the field, and her support and knowledge was invaluable. We offer our gratitude and thanks to Veronica Crombie for her support in this process.

One of the key points of feedback that we brought to the panel was the essential support and care of those working in the sector and how this supports quality, support and retention of staff that then transfers to the quality of care of our children.

This news was very welcome and gives BLÁTHÚ a real sense of achievement! And there is more to be done: our new CEO, Donna Ní Bhaoil, and Chairperson Claudia Juncal, will be attending the next phase of this work "Funding Mechanism", and we look forward to taking the funding of the sector to the next level.

We welcome your contributions to the newsletter

Whether you are a teacher, practitioner, parent, or if you are just interested in what BLÁTHÚ does - we would welcome your contributions to the newsletter.

Perhaps you would like to send in your seasonal reflections, good ideas, articles, stories, songs, book reviews, crafts, patterns, recipes.....

All your suggestions that can enrich our experience, and ultimately, nourish the children, are very welcome.

Please send your contributions to: Ruth Marshall, email: nc.blathu@gmail.com by 25th November.

Kind hearts are the gardens,
Kind thoughts are the roots,
Kind words are the flowers,
Kind deeds are the fruits.
Take care of your garden
And keep out the weeds,
Fill it with sunshine,
Kind words and kind deeds.

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Modern solutions to ancient questions

A four year old child observes the little rainbow colour that was visible on the ceiling of the room.

"Teacher, look! Who is doing those colours? Where are they from?"

"Well, I wonder," answered the teacher, filled with wonder, and in an investigating mood.

They then heard a clear answer from a slightly older child, "I know it, we could Google it, under fairy.com!"

SENSE STIMULATION: WHERE ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN?

By Ulrike Farnleitner

Years ago, when I was teaching in early years, there was a child who was almost blind. The mother raised the question, *“Would stronger colours perhaps activate my child’s senses better than all the subtle colours in the Steiner kindergarten environment?”* The doctor consulted raised her consciousness that the subtlety of the environment would nourish her sense of sight on many levels, and it would be important, according to his knowledge, not to shock her with hard sense impressions.

This remark has stayed with me to this day. Sense impressions can shock, so not everything that stimulates the senses is therefore always good for children. What promotes their development - and what doesn't?

When I had a problem with my eyes and needed them to quieten their movement, the advice was to watch a film instead of reading, as it keeps the sight into still-stand, sort of freezes it. Applying that insight to the screen-frozen child, what else does not move?

Dr. Gerald Hüther makes several remarks that only through movement does a child learn and get impressions that stimulate the brain and all its functions.

We have to distinguish between the stimuli that children seek out themselves and the impressions to which they are passively exposed. And we must further distinguish between the impressions that mainly affect the eye and the ear, and the impressions on the other senses, which tend to be neglected. The urge for discovery that guides children as they begin to conquer their environment stimulates them in many sensory areas. Children want to invent the wheel, they are enthusiastic citizens if we let them be. So let them be inventive on their own terms.

Watching children enthusiastically cleaning out cupboards, stacking things, finding the smallest things in the corner, climbing on chairs and sofas, moving things around the room, shows us that children need time and leisure for their own experimenting and for discovering their surroundings and themselves.

Fortunately, if there are herbs on the window sill or vegetables from the garden, the child can



experience and recognise the connection of harvesting, cleaning, chopping, cooking and eating, and becomes a part of this process - something that we need to eat and live on grows in the earth. It is the task of adults to be involved inwardly and with joy in their activities in the house, garden or workshop. This spurs a child to imitate, and children then understand the processes of a job much better.

In prior centuries children would not have been allowed to move, had to sit still and were prone to experiments as Ashley Montagu gives so many examples in his book ‘Touching’. On a positive side, he remarks that the brain’s ability to conceive, organise and carry out action sequences is dependent on tactile input where, through touch, we are able to discriminate internalised images of the body. Each sense impression is connected with movement and touch which has a huge impact on our wellbeing.

Children don't need constant variety, but a certain amount of gentle space so that they can develop their imagination, interest and creativity without a constant exposure to overstimulation of their senses in shops or screens. Let's be aware where the stress lies for us and our offspring.

STOLEN FOCUS

Some thoughts from the book by Johann Hari, 2022.

By Ulrike Farnleitner

The American psychologist William James wrote that “everyone knows what attention is, attention is a spotlight”. Attention is usually defined as a person’s ability to selectively attend to something in the environment.

Most people fill their lives with constant stimulation which makes it difficult to give attention to one particular experience. Allowing the spotlight of attention to change improves the ability to think and to focus on a task. Without distractions one can retain more of one experience, read longer, stick longer with a book for a longer time.

However, some adults are in panic when not busy with their devices which they use as ‘fake stimulant’.

Johann Hari states that during his technology detox, he realised that the longer one goes without technology the longer the periods of attention stretch and grow. During the time of his ‘media detox’ he also realised that he seemed to be dependent as a journalist on the likes that he used to receive, and had to overcome this need to be appreciated online. His new offline life was a revelation to him.

Hari has lost count of how many people (who know who) have told him that they can only get through a chapter or two of a book before their attention fades completely. A befriended editor of 30 years cannot sustain reading over a long time anymore, before he is drawn back to online technology. This man’s entire life had been about books, and this is worrying.

The number of Americans who read books for pleasure is at an all time low. Statistics show that 57% of Americans now do not even read a single book in one year, yet spend 5.5 hours per day on their phones. Through reading, the human thought process has made the deepest advances and now this experience of reading is in danger to be extinct!

Reading books trains us to read in a linear fashion, focusing on one thing for a long period. Reading from screens, scrolling down or up is a “manic skipping and jumping” from one thing to another. When someone is used to scanning and skimming quickly it is impossible not to be rushing ahead of yourself. This mental dashing around causes us to lose the pleasure and love for reading. What is

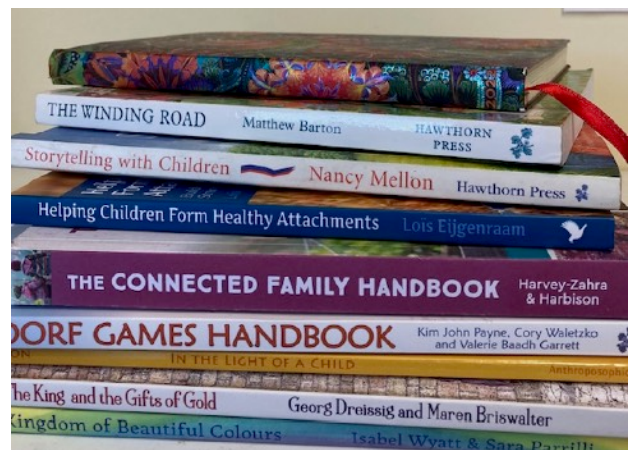
happening with us when we move from books to screens, losing the stamina and ability to deal with challenging texts and comprehension of content? Technology is now transforming the way in which we see the world while it carries buried messages to us. Marshall McLuhan argued that the way information gets to you seems to be more important than the information itself. Hill wondered what are the messages we get from social media in comparison to printed books.

The social media message would be, skim fast and regularly, while reading a book demands time, thought, reflection and imagination. The message of the books takes time and thinking, reflecting and imagining are to be applied.

Books also demand of us to see the world through the eyes of the hero or heroine, imagining the life and experiences of others. “Putting ourselves into the shoes of another” is a life skill that especially children do not learn unless they read story books. Other life skills would be problem-solving, creative thinking and the development of imagination. Concerning children, one other insight was that children show more empathy if they read storybooks. Reading time with one’s child can be extremely enjoyable for all involved as the parents tell the story and the characters come to vibrant and exciting life in the imagination of the child who is filled with amazement and wonder.

There is no better joy than curling up together with your child reading a book aloud.

Not only do we spend quality time together with our children, but participate in the content of the book, which will lead to later discussion and conversation



DIGITAL MEDIA FOR THE YOUNGEST?

By Ulrike Farnleitner

In the 'Discourse Concerning Healthy Childhood' article the International Forum had worked out some clear points to look at the way that children develop with and without digital media. It seems that truly a navigation system is needed for adults in order to find the best pathways through the jungle of information and advertisements, of healthy suggestions and dreadful anxiety, but our path should lead through a landscape of mindful education.

It seems that children from conception onwards are exposed to the virtual world. It starts with the many scans in order to check the growing of the embryo. It is a wonderful achievement of technology and medicine, but who says what is a healthy amount of interference so early?

While the smart phone has found its way into family life, children experience a lack of authentic real time relationships, they miss eye to eye contact and conversation from an early stage of life. It will show in the future what it does to a young human being to be neglected by the overuse of digital media by their parents/carers/teachers or even peers. It is a no brainer to mention the stress level that humans are exposed to when using digital media. It prevents children and adults too often of a good restful night sleep, the images and flat screen

What to do with children instead of giving them your smartphone?

By Ulrike Farnleitner

As already mentioned, contact with Nature in any shape or form is not only wonderful, and can be adventurous, but also supports development and has healing properties.

But really what is most important, is to spend time with your children, mindfully, and switch off the phone!

Have fun! Take time!

Invent stories, as wonderful and as ridiculous as it gets.

Play with your child of all ages.

Find ways around the block of houses that you have never found before.

Hide and seek in the cupboards, behind the sofa, under the duvet... and let yourself be found! That is true excitement for any ages!

Cook and eat together! Creative menus! Clean up together! Try out new cake recipes.

There is no end to any creativity, either with water or mud, with colours, with paper, cardboards...stick your castle together with material you would normally recycle..

So, **play** with your children, **be** with your children and **role model that they are more important to you than the ping of your next text message...**

stories are still working in their minds hours and days after the exposure.

Children are exposed to a lot of radiation when a smart phone is near them and the many other items in the house are running on wifi. With the use of 5G, it may be that this danger even grows. The brain warms up too much and in a very short period of time, and this brain damage is not reversible.

The antidote to too much too soon of media is the contact with and in Nature. Only when children are accustomed to being in Nature, and learn to be with Nature, to experience the vast opportunities that Nature and seasons offer, will they be able later in life to rejuvenate in Nature and protect and work with, instead of exploiting it. We need the future generations to have lots of helpful ideas, invention and visions for a healthy life on a healthy EARTH. Everything takes time and needs time, but why do we expose children too early too soon to digital media? There is not a single advantage, only harm.

https://www.goetheanum-paedagogik.ch/fileadmin/paedagogik/Rundbrief/EN/Paed_RB66_Midsummer2019.pdf

Discourse Concerning Healthy Childhood
Pedagogical Section, Journal No. 66



Adults need to be present so that children can develop their skills without judgement. Let go of schedules and rejuvenate while you are playing actively with your child.

STILL-FACE & FACING THE WORLD

By Ulrike Farnleitner

In 1975, the developmental psychologist Edward Tronick first presented the **"still-face experiment"**. He described a phenomenon in which a baby becomes disillusioned and suspicious after several minutes of unsuccessful interaction with a mother whose face is expressionless and who does not respond. The baby makes repeated attempts to regain its mother's attention; but when these attempts fail, the baby withdraws and turns its face and body away from its mother with a withdrawn, hopeless expression. Further research even suggests links to later behavioural problems and social behaviour disorders.

Why has this experiment become so interesting today? Even when using digital media, for example, engaging with a smartphone in the presence of her baby, the mother's face becomes expressionless and, from the baby's point of view, does not respond to her attempts to interact. By the way, the still-face effect is not only triggered by the mother, but also by fathers and even strangers.

Please do remember this the next time you use a smartphone or similar in the presence of a baby.
<https://bildschirmfrei-bis-3.de>

Face the World? How to use buggies



Another disengagement happens when parents use the buggies where the face is turned away from the front of the parents. Advertisements try to convince parents that the young child needs to face the world. But from a developmental point of view, it might be a tremendous overwhelm to face the world like this. Babies and young children need the interaction with the carer, the facial expression, especially in new situations, that talking through body gestures and words, sounds, songs. With this secured relationship, to face the world is a safe experience where protection is given while exploration can happen step by step over time. Children are active participants in social interaction and not a passive audience.

Face-to-face interaction and play is one of the main forms of connection between caregivers/parents and their infants in the first few months of life. here are numerous benefits that face-to-face play provides for infants' social cognitive development.

Show me your personality - with your full face

We pay a huge price for the comfortable online solutions, where we don't need to take the burden of journey and travel to the different meeting places, no traffic, no time delay. Only have to deal with the online hiccups, the internet connectivity and then the stare and fixation of our gaze to the screen. Do we really take care over safe time sufficiently? Can we think as fast as everyone speaks? To speak up in isolation to a group of others who also sit in isolation in front of screens. Do we observe a certain awareness of the emptiness of social encounter with the flat screen?

In times of digital use and unconscious disconnect, conscious and personal face-to-face communication is more important than ever, especially in times where we have become aware that showing ourselves with a visible face helps to build trust and foster relationships.

In teams it can also lead to better collaboration, greater productivity, and more innovation and creativity while a constant only-online connection seems to endanger the humanity in our endeavour of interaction.

Let's meet again in person soon!

Ulrike translated from the German website <https://bildschirmfrei-bis-3.de> and added some content of her own.

FACE TO FACE - EYE TO EYE

By Ruth Marshall

Some years ago, I took part in an experiment to see what happens when total strangers sit and look into each other's eyes for 1 minute - "The World's Biggest Eye Contact Experiment." They say the eyes are windows to the soul; that when we gaze into another's eyes, oxytocin (the bonding hormone) is released. They say it takes just 4 minutes of eye-gazing to fall in love.

In a busy shopping street in Limerick, my friend Lucia laid out rugs on the pavement, and brought cushions for passers-by to sit upon in clearly defined spaces. There were a few colourful signs to draw people's attention, and soft music playing in the background. I sat on one cushion and waited for a stranger to sit on the cushion opposite me. All around us shoppers continued to pass us by, some curious, most busy.

Eye-gazing, without words, has been used in many trainings I have taken part in - in storytelling, teaching, counselling, coaching, etc. Rationally, I know that it gives an opportunity to bypass the intellect and get straight into a "gnowing" connection with another person. It somehow gives a deeper understanding and helps to build trust, empathy and compassion for others. But to sit in the middle of a city street and wait for a stranger to gaze into my eyes? Well, we would not be strangers for long!

At first, I was acutely aware of the noise and bustle of the street, and my gaze flickered here and there, from one eye to the other, their nose, eyebrows, a particular freckle... But after a while it settled down, and their eyes had become the centre of my universe. Calm spread around us. For a while, it felt like we were the only two people in the centre of Limerick. We just *were*. I felt a wave of warmth and acceptance for this being who was being revealed to me. I also knew that my presence was being met with the same warmth, respect and acceptance from them. What felt at first like an impossibly long time, suddenly ended with the gentle sound of a bell. I still sat there, reluctant to let go of my new friend. We each reached out to hold the other's hands, then helped each other to our feet, still feeling a bit of reticence about putting any of this into words. But then, perhaps a hug is enough to say it all?



Lucia and friend sit eye-to-eye in a busy Limerick shopping street.

Ready to try this yourself?

1. Sit in a comfortable position, either on the floor or on a chair facing your partner. Make sure that your eyes are at a similar level, adding more cushions if needed.
2. Set a timer for 1 minute, and then relax, breathe, and look softly into your partner's eyes. (This is not a staring competition - we are all winners here!)
3. Breathe gently, and keep breathing. Keep your gaze soft and try not to look away, let yourself blink if you need to. If you feel embarrassed or uncomfortable, just acknowledge any resistance and let it pass. If tears come, let them..
4. When the timer goes off, relax and release your gaze, and thank your partner. Notice how you feel. Have a stretch.
5. Reflect on the experience with your partner.

"Hope is not something that you have.

Hope is something that you create, with your actions"

- Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, in conversation with Greta Thunberg

JOIN BLÁTHÚ TODAY!

As a member of BLÁTHÚ, you are part of a recognised professional body which, through its mission and actions, is committed to furthering the profile and formation of the Steiner-Waldorf Early Years services and pedagogy.

During the lockdowns, we suspended membership fees, but now that “normal service” is resuming, we need to ask you to renew your membership. BLÁTHÚ depends on your membership fees.

Types of membership:

Associate membership is available to organisations such as VCOs, Universities or Colleges who wish to associate themselves with BLÁTHÚ, receiving updates and discounts to BLÁTHÚ events.

Cost: €65 p/a

Individual membership is available to members of the general public and parents of children who may be attending one of our member settings, receiving updates, newsletters and discounts to BLÁTHÚ events.

Cost: €25 p/a

Settings Membership is open to Kindergartens/Early Years Services as organisations which allows you to avail of FULL benefits. 3 contact persons receiving correspondence, usually lead teacher, assistant teacher & the committee secretary. All members of staff/committee can avail of discounted entry to BLÁTHÚ workshops & events.

Cost: €75 p/a

New or smaller initiatives such as parent & toddler groups can take out **reduced** membership, which means they can avail of full benefits with one person receiving correspondence & discounts.

Cost: €35 p/a

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP?

Benefits to All Members

- Join with members nationwide strengthening Steiner Education throughout the Early Years sector.
- Receive the quarterly BLÁTHÚ newsletter
- Receive a discount on BLÁTHÚ events and publications
- Receive regular updates & job vacancy information
- Mentoring and support

Additional Benefits to Full Members

- BLÁTHÚ is a recognised professional body
- BLÁTHÚ represents you at national and international levels
- Your service's website can be linked from listing on www.blathu.org

So, what do I do now - how do I join BLÁTHÚ?

Contact the National Co-ordinator, Ruth Marshall: Email: nc.blathu@gmail.com or tel: 089 241 1816, and request a membership form, or download the form from our website.

BLÁTHÚ'S CPD PROGRAMME FOR 2022

As part of our implementation Plan for 2022, BLÁTHÚ has committed to a year long programme of CPD workshops. These workshops are open to teachers, practitioners, parents - and anyone else who is open to learning more.

Coming up next - put the date in your diary now!

BLATHU ONE-DAY CONFERENCE 2022 "GETTING BACK IN TOUCH"

Sat 5th November

ALFA Raheenwood, Tuamgraney, Co Clare

Getting Back in Touch - a day celebrating, exploring, re-connecting and sharing our collective wisdom and experience. For kindergarten and early years teachers, assistants, students, parents, and all who support this work.

More information, and the programme will be available on our website shortly.

Next CPD workshop - Festivals

In November or December, we will be hosting a workshop exploring how we can enrich the life of our kindergarten and homes through celebrating culturally appropriate festivals. Date and venue are to be confirmed. Please check our website for more details.

Please let us know what you need, and then BLÁTHÚ will try to include your interests in our planning of future events.

Contact Ruth 0892411816, or email nc.blathu@gmail.com



Feedback from our September CPD Workshop - "Out of Doors" at Strawberry Hill Kindergarten, Cork with Ulrike Farnleitner

An enthusiastic group shared a fun day day, exploring play out of doors. They said:

"It was so good to keep the connection and strengthen the team work"

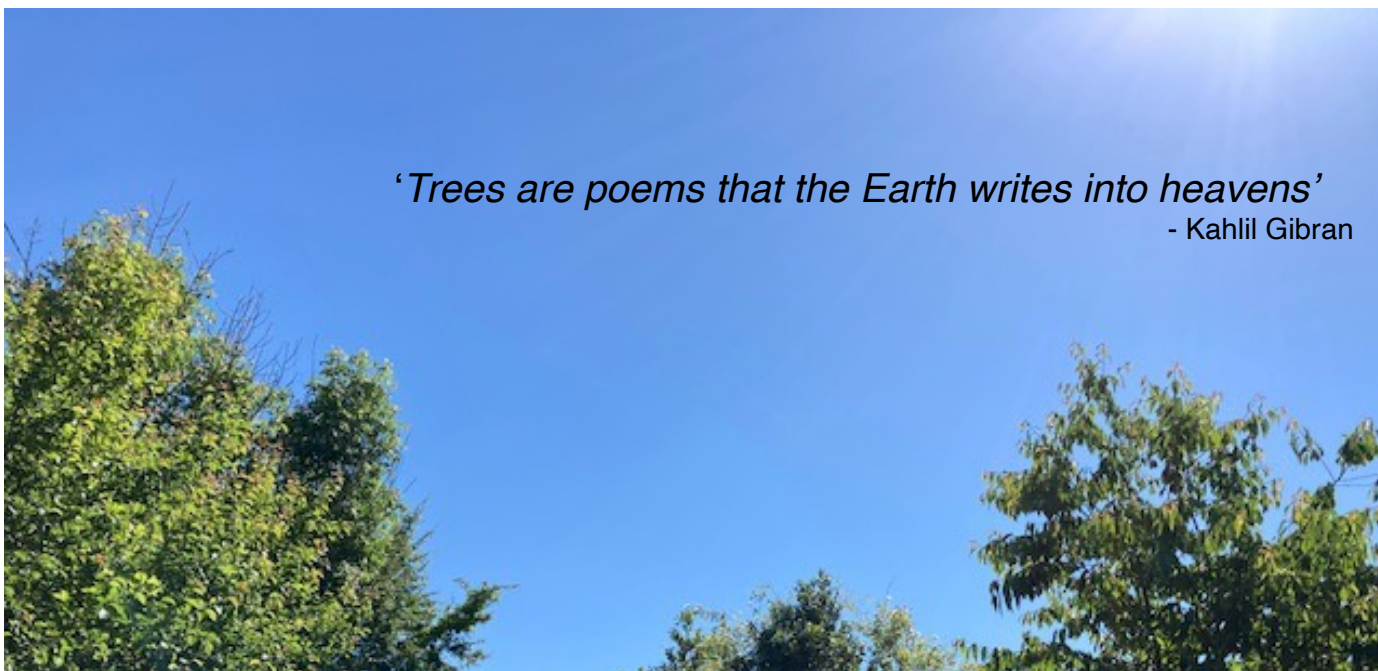
"I feel confirmed in myself. So good to take time and to go on a treasure hunt in the woods"

"I have renewed the feeling of the 'other' and to be with the 'other', Got new inspiration."

"I feel inspired to strengthen inner images and let them out in story telling"

"Attraction to the invisible and taking time for myself to see, look, watch, discover"

TREES -



'Trees are poems that the Earth writes into heavens'

- Kahlil Gibran

Our ancient friends - trees - Ulrike

Trees play a much bigger role in the history of mankind than we are aware of. History knows famous stories of trees. Symbolic stories of trees played an important role in our ancient mythologies and history.

In North Mythology, for example, Yggdrasil the World Ash Tree connects the nine worlds above and below. Midgard, is the world of humans, with the world of the Gods above, protecting and guiding humans, and the underworld of Hel below, threatening the essence of humankind. At the very roots, a dangerous dragon gnaws on the life force of the tree, weakening the tree for the day of Ragnarok, the reckoning of the Gods and life as such. Interestingly it is in the middle where we find the central position of the human world, the position of humankind at the centre.

In Indian mythology, we find Buddha, who sat under the mighty branches of the Bodhi Tree receiving enlightenment. In the ancient Celtic traditions, the Celts chose sacred tree groves to celebrate their ceremonies. Historically, in the olden times, each village had a village tree where people gathered, exchanged their goods, held their judgments, and felt connected to their clans.

In many stories and fairy tales, trees also play an important role, bearing golden fruit, which often symbolise wisdom. In the IASWECE story book, we can find a wonderful African story, where the people suffer famine because they forgot the name of the tree and can only be saved by their animal friends.

Approximately 30 to 60 million species of trees live on our planet and provide nesting sites, food, habitat, and shelter for a wide variety of animals. For us humans, trees provide oxygen, shelter, building material, fuel and so much more. Trees filter the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, giving us life.

Sustainable reforestation is therefore existential to protect our climate and the health of our planet.

Instead of behaving like the dragon of Yggdrasil, cutting down trees for 5G reasons, or other short-sighted quick fix improvements, let's plant trees for the well-being of all living beings on Earth. Let us remember the life giving force of trees. Let's walk in the forest, slow down, calm our senses, destress and rejuvenate our lungs and entire being. Enjoy!

<https://iaswece.org/home/> For the children of the world-story book, compiled and translated for IASWECE.

The WoodWideWeb - Ruth

Science now acknowledges that trees communicate with each other via the "wood-wide-web" - mycelium underground that connects trees and aids them in passing on nutrients and messages about stresses and cries for help from one to the other.

For humans, lying on the ground under a tree, looking up through the dappled light, is a most relaxing thing to do. Most of us probably know this from experience, but now science tells us that the moving, alternate light and shade has healing and balancing effects for us. This is one of the benefits of forest bathing - something that we may well have known in childhood, but sadly, often forget as we grow up. Trees, with their strong deep roots, can help us when we are in a state of anxiety or deep sorrow. Tree-hugging is not just a practice for old hippies. It is worth giving it a try.

Have you spent too much time working on-screen, talking online? Take off your shoes and stand on the ground, feel your roots stretching deep, your branches reaching high, your trunk stable and strong. Breathe, and get reconnected to the wood-wide-web!

FOR THE SEASONS - NATURE ACTIVITIES

Finding Faces in Nature

By Ruth Marshall

Do you ever, when you are out for a walk in the woods, notice faces in the gnarled bark of a tree? Or on interestingly shaped stones? Or patterns in pebbles and seaweed on the sand at the seashore? Or even in the rock face of a cliff or hillside? Or in the clouds?

I remember the moment, during the first of the Covid lockdowns of 2020, I had seen no one for several days, and was delighted when a little stick amongst my pile of kindlers seemed to have a simple face. Just two dots for eyes and a curved smile line below. I was reminded of the moment in the film “Castaway” when Tom Hanks makes a face on a volleyball with his handprint, and gives him a name. Perhaps we just need to see a face, or even an approximation of a human face, in order to feel more human ourselves.

There is a name for this phenomenon of seeing faces: “face pareidolia”, a type of apophenia, which means the ability to see pattern in apparently random data. It is why we see “the man in the moon” or sylphs in the movement patterns of clouds. Perhaps there are evolutionary reasons for our tendency to see faces in inanimate objects. Certainly, from early childhood, faces are the most common stimuli we meet in everyday life, so perhaps we developed the means to see and recognise faces and the emotions they convey quickly, so that we could respond appropriately. Sometimes we interpret faces we find in nature, landscape or inanimate objects as spiritual experiences, glimpses of another reality inhabited by fairies, gnomes, nature spirits, and maybe they are.

Natural Emoticons

But, just for fun, we could think of the faces we find in nature as “natural emoticons.”

Looking out for friendly faces is a way of engaging with the natural world. Finding an almost-face, and then enhancing it with details - a friendly smile, twinkling eyes - allows us to bring our creativity into our engagement with nature.

So why not, next time you go for a walk in the woods, on the shore, by the river bank, in the park, or even just along the road, keep an eye out for friendly faces. It can be a lot of fun, and if nothing else, it will enhance your experience of the place and its creatures.



Above: found faces on sticks, stones, branches and leaves.

Below: faces made from natural materials where there was already a hint of a face waiting to be seen.



FOR THE SEASONS - NATURE

Yarrow - a healing herb

By Ruth Marshall & Ulrike Farnleitner

The perennial herb Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*; *Athair thalún*) is a wonderful plant to have in your garden, or to gather on your walks in Nature, and to harvest for drying. The flowers and leaves are used to make medicine. Yarrow is used as herb tea and for compresses to support the detox of the liver, to rejuvenate your energy.

Identifying Yarrow:

Yarrow has very distinctive, dark green, feathery leaves. It flowers from very early summer to early autumn, with a composite flower head that forms a flat cluster. Flowers can be white or pink. It is not easily confused with other plants, but do make sure that you know what to look for, and check a good plant ID guide, such as <http://www.wildflowersofireland.net>

Gathering Yarrow:

If you gather yarrow yourself, make sure that you really know what to look for and find an unspoilt area where you gather it. Morning is the best time for collecting the flower heads and leaves. Cut whole flowering stalks and leaves, and hang in bunches to dry, or lay it on a cloth, but never in sunshine. Once dried, strip the flowers and leaves and store in a dark jar. Discard the stalks.



Uses for Yarrow:

Best to drink a weak infusion first thing in the morning, and to enjoy compress after your lunch. (*We are not offering any medical advice here, only to support the day to day feeling of health and positive energy.*)

The herb is slightly bitter, therefore for a pleasant experience, use just a little of the dried leaves and flowers in your cup and get used to this taste. One teaspoon of the herb to a cup of boiling water is plenty.

If you use already packed teabags, be aware to only use one in a pot and do not to leave it in to infuse for too long after you pour the boiling water on top of it. As it also aids digestion, it might also replace the cup of coffee after a meal.

Yarrow Liver Compress:

The *liver compress* is easily done, and is often suggested for periods of tiredness and debilitation. You prepare the sofa or your bed with a big long towel across the bed. Make a stronger infusion this time, as you will dip a face cloth into the tea after 5 minutes and wring it out. Mind your fingers, as it will be really hot! The more you wring it the better. You lie down, put the hot soaked flannel on your body, under the ribs on your right side (where your liver is) as warm as you can bear it, but don't burn your skin! Put a small towel over this wet face cloth, then pull the bigger towel over your stomach and tuck yourself in. A half filled hot water bottle is placed on this side, and a warm



FOR THE SEASONS - NATURE

woolly blanket tucked in over all the layers of towels. Now you rest for 25 minutes. You then take out the wet cloth and keep resting for another 10 minutes. After that, you will find yourself rejuvenated and wonderfully awake, ready for the rest of the afternoon.

Take care of your blankets, and towels, you will dry and reuse them. Good health!

(<https://www.developingtheself.org/homecare/2021/8/25/yarrow-liver-compress-instructions> <https://steinerhealth.org/liver-yarrow-compress/>)

Yarrow in Folklore & Tradition:

Yarrow's botanical name, *Achillea millefolium*, comes from the Greek hero Achilles, who was born a mortal, to an immortal mother, Thetis. Thetis dipped her babe in the waters of the River Styx in the belief that this would give him immortality, or at least that this would protect him from wounding. However, Thetis held her child by his heel while she dipped him, which left him with one unprotected spot. Still in common usage today, our "Achilles Heel" is our weak spot, the place where we are vulnerable and easily wounded. Achilles was said to have used Yarrow for binding soldiers' wounds during the Trojan war. It has traditionally been used for staunching wounds and nosebleeds.

If a child has a nosebleed, take a handful of Yarrow leaves and rub them between your fingers, then roll the softened leaves to make a little 'plug'. Push this a little way into the bleeding nostril (not too far) and leave it there until the bleeding stops.

Yarrow stalks were originally what was used for divination using the I Ching - the Chinese "book of changes", while in Irish folk tradition, Yarrow stalks were used by young people to discover their future beloved. "On May Eve, each person pulled ten stalks. Nine of the stalks were put under the pillow at night, and the tenth was thrown away. The sleeper was then supposed to dream of their future husband or wife."



This verse was spoken as each stalk was pulled:

*Good morrow, good morrow fair Yarrow,
And thrice good morrow to thee,
I hope before this time to-morrow,
Thou wilt show my true love to me.*

A leaf held against the eyes was believed to give second sight. Yarrow was also hung around the house, or carried on the person if travelling, for its protective qualities.

A tray of seaside treasures

Don't we all love to fill our pockets with treasures from a seaside walk?

Here is a lovely way to display them. All you need is a tray, perhaps a cloth. Then combine all your found treasures, such as shells, stones with holes, crab claws, favourite rocks, dry seaweed, etc, in a pleasing way to make a lovely display of memories from a day at the beach.

Of course, you could do the same for a walk in the woods, using nuts, leaves, seeds, etc. found along your way. There's nothing quite like having a pocket bulging with smooth conkers or acorns.



FOR THE SEASONS - SONGS & VERSES

SEASONAL VERSES AND SONGS FOR AUTUMN IN THE IRISH LANGUAGE

By Linda Grant

In his beautiful book “*Thirty Two Words for Field*,” Manchán Magan tells us that the Irish language is rooted in a time when people had easy access to the other realms. Gaeilge holds our most fundamental ways of thinking, of feeling and of living with the seen and unseen worlds.

He believes that the Irish language is:

“... a language that not only describes things but also summons them into being, a language that communicates not only to others but to the psyche and the subconscious, a language that is deeply rooted in the environment and can connect us to our surroundings in remarkable ways.” (page 12)

The young Irish child and all young children living in Ireland, belong to the world of interconnectedness with the Irish landscape, with the spiritual. Songs and rhymes in the Irish language are a wonderful way of speaking to their understanding of the world. Songs and rhymes have always been a way of teaching language and all that it holds.

Amhrán (Song):

Trup Trup A Chapaillín

Trup, trup a chapaillín ar an mbóthar,
Siúil go mall is sodar go réidh.
As go brách go barr Bhinn Éadair
Tiocfaimid abhaile in am don tae.

Trup, trup, trup, trup,
Trup, trup, trup.

Stop, stop a chapaillín seo Binn Éadair,
Áit a mbíodh na filí fadó.
Áit a mbíodh Fionn is Fianna,
Diarmuid agus Gráinne óg.

Trup, trup, trup, trup
Trup, trup, trup.

Trup, trup a chapaillín, síos le fána,
Cosa in airde i ndeireadh an lae.
Oiche mhaith, a néalta bána.
Fillfimid abhaile in am don tae.

Trup, trup, trup, trup
Trup, trup, trup.

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjS8eK9n-T5AhWOFMAKHQLPCIoQwqsBegQIGBAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fscreen-cast-o-matic.com%2Fwatch%2FcrVolp9V7w&usq=AOvYawISbXfOJj57cWYVWwQJPZE9>

Another rhyme for small children. But sung a little bit slower! Marguerite Devanne uses the melody for Duilleoga Deasa Deasa for this and it works well.

<https://caera.bandcamp.com/track/cuirfimid-deanda-deanda-well-put-a-dandy-dandy>

Cuirfimid Deandaí Deandaí (We'll Put a Dandy Dandy) / Caer

In English:

Hup! Hup pony on the road,
Walk slowly and tread gently
Off we go to the top of Howth,
We'll get home in time for tea.

Hup, Hup etc

Stop! Stop pony here is Howth,
The place of the poets long ago.
The place of Fionn and the Fianna,
Of Diarmuid and young Gráinne.

Hup, Hup etc.

Hup! Hup little pony down the slope,
Feet up at the end of the day.
Good night, white clouds.
We will return home in time for tea.

Hup, hup etc.

Amhrán an Fómhair

Duilleoga deasa, deasa
Duilleoga deasa buí
Duilleoga deasa deasa
Ag damhsa ar an gcraobh

Duilleoga deasa, deasa
Duilleoga deasa buí
Duilleoga deasa deasa
Ag imeacht leis an ngaoith

Duilleoga deasa, deasa
Duilleoga deasa buí
Duilleoga deasa deasa
Ar an dtalamh ina luí.

Autumn song

Lovely, lovely leaves
Pretty yellow leaves
Lovely, lovely leaves
Dancing on the branch.
Lovely, lovely leaves
Pretty yellow leaves
Lovely, lovely leaves
Gone with the wind.

Lovely, lovely leaves
Pretty yellow leaves
Lovely, lovely leaves
Lying on the ground.

FOR THE SEASONS - RANNTA (RHYMES)

Lámh, lámh eile, a haon, a dó.
Cos, cos eile, a haon, a dó.
Súil, súil eile, a haon, a dó.
Cluas, cluas eile, a haon, a dó.
Ceann, srón, béal agus smig.
Is na fiacla bána sa bhéal istigh.

*Hand, other hand, one, two.
Foot, other foot, one, two.
Eye, other eye, one, two.
Ear, other ear, one, two.
Head, nose, mouth and chin.
And the white teeth inside the mouth.*



Ha amach, ha amach, capaillin spágach,
Beimid sa Daingean an taca seo amárach,
Deinse an crú is déanfadsa an tairne,
Is beimid sa Daingean an taca seo amárach.

**Hayho, hayho, little clumsy horse,
We'll be in Dingle this time tomorrow,
You do the shoe and I'll do the nail,
We'll be in Dingle this time tomorrow.**

Carr Beag
Carr beag dearg
Carr beag buí,
Carr beag gorm,
A haon, a dó, a trí.

Mise an Traein
Mise an traein, puff, puff, puff
Mise an madra, bhuf, bhuf, bhuf
Mise an bus, bip bip bip
Mise an tsicín, tsíp, tsíp, tsíp.

Roille roille ráinne (Ring-a-ring o' Roses)

Roille roille ráinne
Timpeall linn í bhfáinne-
Ríleoro! Ríleoro!
Suas san aer le mo chóisín ó!

Mórthimpeall is mórtimpeall (Round and round the garden)

Mórthimpeall is mórtimpeall,
bogann an teidí béar,
aon chéim, dhá chéim,
cigilimís go léir.

Is taephota mise (I'm a little teapot)

Is taephota mise ramhar is beag,
Seo mo chluas is seo mo ghob,
Éist le mo ghlór is na chupáin
ag teacht,
Árdaigh mé is doirt mé amach!

There are many resources on line and in your local library here are some that I used:
Resources: twinkle.ie
<https://Rannta Gaeilge - Irish Rhymes for all levels>
fearasscoile.wordpress.com/2016/02/22/rannta-gaeilge-irish-rhymes-for-all-levels/

FOR THE SEASONS - A SINGING GAME

KLING, KLANG, GLORIA A. Künstler, adapted

Kling, klang, glo-ri-a, ro-sa ro-sa fil-i-a, Who
 sits in yon-der cas-tle there? A love-ly maid-en,
 young and fair. May we see her too? No, no, no! The
 cas-tle wall is far too high, you must break off a
 stone. First stone; se-cond stone; third stone:
 All with me must go.

Ending: ♣ Yes, yes, yes! The lovely maiden young and fair is now forever free, is now forever free. (Game ends at ⊗ .)

Music and lyrics are from the book, **“Dancing as We Sing, Seasonal Circle Play”** by Nancy Foster

To play the game:

Children stand in a circle, holding hands. They are the “stones of the tower.”

Three children sit, as the “lovely maiden,” or captive in the tower, in the centre of the circle.

One teacher and one child, stand outside the circle, as “the prince,” or rescuer.

Children in the circle move clockwise. Outside the circle, the prince (holding hands) moves counter-clockwise while the first verse is sung: “Kling, Klang Gloria ... May we see her too?”

All stop walking, and shake heads: “No, no, No! The castle wall is far too high. You must break off a stone.”

“First stone”: The prince/rescuer taps one of the children who form the circle on the shoulder. This child takes the prince’s hand and forms the beginning of a chain.

“Second stone”: Rescuer taps a second child on the shoulder, who then takes the hand of the last person in the chain.

“Third stone”: Repeat the same again...

The song and actions continue, repeating until all the children have become “stones,” and been broken away from the circle, and only a teacher is left as the “castle wall,” with their arms in a large ‘O’ gesture. The captive/maiden is free! Singing, while raising arms: “Yes, yes! The lovely maiden young and fair, is now forever free!” ‘Maidens’ stand up, all clap or bow on “is forever free” to end the game.

Instructions given here are a combination of those in “Dancing as we Sing” and in “The Waldorf Games Handbook for the Early Years” so that you can consider whether you wish to use the word “captive” rather than “maiden” and “rescuer” rather than “prince” without imposing defined gender roles for the children.

FOR THE SEASONS: AN AUTUMN SONG

By Urszula Sawicka Gamarra

If you have ever observed Waldorf teachers, you probably noticed... They sing all the time! They sing when welcoming the children in the morning, when knitting, when tidying up. They probably even sing a serenade to the dishes at home before realising they are not in the kindergarten anymore. For me, singing became a part of my 'teacher identity' - a habit I carried on around with me. I would bring the kindergarten mood with me anywhere I went.

As teachers, we strive to create a nourishing environment for children in our care. Yet until recently, I did not make any connection to how music utterly nourishes them and what a big impact it has on the life of a little child. It is connected with everything we provide in the kindergarten. We carefully plan daily rhythm, filled with breathe-in and out activities, we choose natural materials for crafts and prepare simple and nourishing meals to tune ourselves with the world around us. Music plays an extremely important part in the first 7 years of the child's wholesome upbringing. It has a power to shift the mood, to bring us all together as a group, to help with transition and challenges. Music is an integral part of that nourishing environment we aim to create. And it may become a shelter in which the child feels safe and joyful. It definitely became that for me and my inner child. Kindergarten songs cheer me and accompany me throughout my yearly journey of the seasons.

I decided to share with you and your little ones my love for music, singing and play. And so, I began to write my own pentatonic tunes in the Mood of the Fifth.

Urszula works at the Dublin Steiner School and is a student on the Soulscape early years training.

"To create an environment that nourishes the young children in our care... an environment filled with beauty, warmth and joy... an environment that supports the child's growth in body, soul, and spirit: This is our goal as adults inspired by Waldorf education. And music is part of that environment!"

- Nancy Foster



Autumn Song

$\text{♩} = 80$



Tipperty - toes, the small-est elf, Sat on a mush - room by him-self,

(hands join above the head, sway right and left)

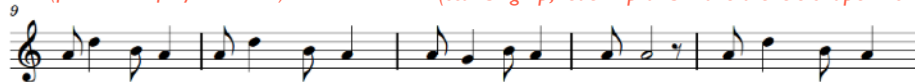
(crouch down to the ground)



Play-ing this litt - le tink - ling tune Un - der the big round har - vest moon:

(pretend to play the violin)

(standing up, reach up and make a circle shape in the air)



I love to skip through the wood - lands on the au - tumn day, Pick crim - son leaves

(Hold hands and make a ring, skip in the circle)



and shi - ny con - kers ly - ing on my way!

(Hold hands and make a ring, skip in the circle)

Variation: You may change 'skip' to 'jump', 'walk', or 'tiptoe'

Lyrics, adapted: Elizabeth Gould, Urszula Gamarra



Awareness of Toxic Plants

With changes in our weather patterns, we are seeing fruits this year on trees that do not usually develop in this way here in Ireland. With this, we need to be aware of potential hazards to young children. We may have been used to having particular trees as great climbing trees, but now, we may need to learn a bit more about them.

For example, the Cherry Laurel, whose fruits resemble bunches of red grapes, is one to take note of. Although the fruits have traditionally been used in Turkey, both fresh and cooked, as a delicacy, the pips contain cyanide, and can be extremely dangerous if eaten by children. Just 10 berries, if ingested could be enough to cause very serious illness, possibly even death.

The berries have a tough and waxy outside coat, but they are the size and colour of a red grape, and could be easily be mistaken for such by a small child.

We are not recommending that you cut down mature trees - but it may be necessary to avoid the area where the berries fall, during the fruiting season in order to keep the children, particularly the very young, safe from the temptation of putting them in their mouths.



Recipe - Apricot cake

Ingredients:

200g Flour Spelt or any other flour of your choice
 75g Hazelnuts fine cut not ground
 200g Butter unsalted
 185g Sugar brown or white
 Vanilla sugar/ flavour
 4 eggs organic
 Apricot halves for the size of the cake, slightly steamed

For the top after baking:

25 fine cut Hazelnuts
 200ml Apricot Jam
 50g candied Orange Peels



It is best is to have all ingredients at room temperature. If you cannot get Hazelnuts, you can use mixed nuts, like almonds, pecan, walnuts. No additional raising agent is needed for this mixture.

Method:

Lightly steam the apricot halves, and reserve the steaming water; add a little sugar to make a syrup. Mix the butter, sugar and eggs well. Add hazelnuts and flour. Spoon the mix into the well prepared tin and place the soft cooled steamed halves of apricots, on top. On top of the fruit you sprinkle 25g fine chopped hazelnuts. Bake for 50 Minutes at 160 degrees. After baking, pierce small holes into the baked cake with a tooth pick, and pour approx. 200ml of the apricot syrup onto the cake. When the cake has cooled down, mix finely cut candied orange peel into 200ml apricot jam, warm this mix and apply it to the top and sides of the cake. Enjoy this fine taste!

Just to know, the original recipe had two spoons full of Rum in the apricot juice mix, but of course if you bake for children it tastes lovely without alcohol.

Variation: If you have other fruits, you can vary and experiment with blackberries and apples.

BOOK REVIEW

By Ruth Marshall

Perhaps every young family should be provided with a copy of this book free of charge. This is a beautifully-presented and practical book. Printed on strong, non-glossy paper, it is jam-packed with simple, fun, nourishing activities for the very young. As kindergarten workers, you might already be familiar with many of the ideas, but even so, there is bound to be something new here that you can bring into your work with parents, encouraging them to try it at home.

I'm not a granny (yet...), but there are two new babies in my extended family, and I plan to supply both these families with a copy of this book. I know our children are usually our best teachers, but this book is just such a good place to start when the idea of creating a nurturing home is new and daunting.

Starting with the notion of kindness, and how we can teach and express this, the book goes on to explore home, food, movement, warmth, working together, nature, celebration and wonder. It is a book for parents, educators, carers, for all of us, and is filled with hope. Hope for creating nurturing connections. Hope for a future of warm relationships with others and with the Earth.

As a resource book, it offers rhythm and is rich in stories, craft activities, recipes, finger games, verses, songs, blessings... but most of all, kindness.

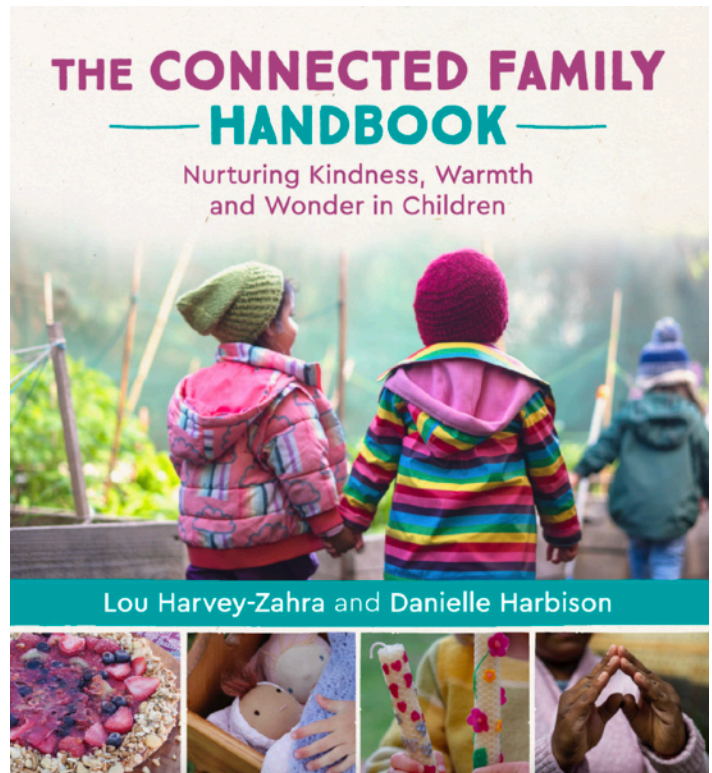
In addition to the children's games, etc, there is also space for adult reflection, with short exercises to help you get in touch with memories from your own childhood that you could share, or examine "home" through a child's eyes. Learn how to use creative discipline, build your storytelling skillset, have fun with food. Personal favourites of mine are: the magical tomato and egg toadstools on page 185, and the sweet oatly busy bees on page 167.

There is a line in a well-known old Scottish song, "We'll take a cup o' kindness yet..." This book is definitely a full cup of it. So go on, be kind to yourself, buy a copy for your home, your kindergarten, your grandchildren.

A home blessing

Bless our house as we come and go
Bless our home as the children grow.
Bless our families as they gather in,
Bless our home with love and friends.

Anon



The Connected Family Handbook Nurturing Kindness, Warmth and Wonder in Children

Lou Harvey-Zahra and Danielle Harbison
Floris Books ISBN 9781782508137
£16.99. Paperback. 224 pages



The instructions for making these magical tomato and egg toadstools are on page 185 of this lovely book. Yum!

BLÁTHÚ is a recognised member of IASWECE, the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education.

IASWECE gives financial and pedagogical support to projects in order to develop and maintain the quality of Waldorf early childhood education throughout the world. For this IASWECE depends on the generous help of colleagues and friends, and therefore welcomes your donations. IASWECE is always happy to receive donations to help with their many early years projects around the world. You can make donations on line. See <https://iaswece.org/how-you-can-help/> for bank details.

For the IASWECE newsletter, go to www.iaswece.org/iaswece-newsletter/



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For full job description please visit <https://kindrogan.school/vacancies/>



KINDLING



KINDLING
The Journal for Steiner Waldorf Early
Childhood Care and Education



Issue 40 - 2021

Theme: Diversity & Inclusivity
Festivals & more

The Journal
for Steiner
Waldorf
Early
Childhood
Care and
Education

Published twice yearly in the UK, available as printed copy or PDF (for worldwide subscription) KINDLING contains themed articles (Issue 39 and 40 are both on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) songs, stories, crafts, research, health, information, book reviews, news and more...

It is of interest to anyone concerned with the young child and Steiner Waldorf early childhood education and care.

For more information, please Email: earlyyearsnews@aol.com
Please note one 'y' in the email address.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

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SAT NOV 5TH

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