

# **Curiosity Woods Forest Play Program**

## **Handbook**

(updated 7/9/2023)

Play, wonder, and explore while immersed in the natural world at The Morton Arboretum! In these three-week, mixed-ages programs, children become active learners as they follow their curiosity about the natural world and draw on direct physical and social experiences outdoors. Through child-led nature play and exploration in the Arboretum's East Woods, along with storytelling, sharing time, and other developmentally-appropriate activities, the programs will offer participants the freedom to learn in an environment filled with wonder and new discoveries every day.

### **Program Philosophy**

"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood." - Fred Rogers

Through child-led nature play and exploration, along with storytelling, sharing time, and other developmentally-appropriate activities, children have the freedom to learn in an environment filled with wonder and new discoveries every day. Through observation of children's curiosity, interests and thinking, teachers will tailor activities to encourage children's progress toward developmental domains including early childhood learning domains such as social/emotional development and cognitive learning as well as environmental learning domains such as curiosity and questioning and developing a sense of responsibility and caring for the world around them.

### **Drop-off and Pick-up**

Drop-off and pick-up for Curiosity Woods will typically take place near the Visitor Center or at the P1 picnic area, along with special area drop off days detailed closer to the program start date. Special area drop-offs will be chosen based on seasonality and availability, typically in easy to find areas such as the P13 Big Rock Visitor Station or the P25 Prairie Visitor Station.

Drop-Off: 1:20-1:35 pm

- Please make sure your child uses the restroom before the start of class. Portable restrooms are available in the main lot and the P1 picnic area, indoor restrooms are available near in the Visitor Center and Children's Garden.

Pick-Up: 3:30 pm

- We will not dismiss your child to an unauthorized person or someone not indicated on your registration form. You may add people to your list at any time. For identification purposes, a driver's license may be required prior to departure.

If your child will miss a day, please contact the program supervisor: Kathryn Neuffer at [kneuffer@mortonarb.org](mailto:kneuffer@mortonarb.org) or 630.725.2033 or send a message directly through Seesaw.

### **Daily Supplies:**

- ☐ Dressed for the weather (See the Clothing Section for guidance)
- ☐ Water bottle labeled with child's name
- ☐ Snack
- ☐ Rain gear/Snow Gear (weather dependent)
- ☐ Extra set of dry clothes(shirt, pants, socks and underwear)

### **Bug Spray**

If you wish your child to have bug spray, the parent or caregiver should apply it before class. If your child has been exposed to poison ivy, staff will apply Tecnu to the affected area. If your child is having a non-life-threatening reaction (welt) to a bug bite, staff will apply an ice pack and/or benzocaine. In either case, staff will let the guardians know upon pick up.

### **Sun Safety and Sunscreen**

Sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher is recommended year round, even in Winter as the sun can reflect off snow. Sunglasses and hats help protect eyes and faces; long-sleeved shirts and pants protect our arms and legs. Sun protection is a priority year round, and we will take extra care to prioritize shady spots especially during sunny days.

### **Clothing**

How to Dress in Warm Weather:

- Light-colored clothing is best
- We recommend lightweight pants tucked into socks in order to protect against ticks, poison ivy, and mosquitoes.
- A hat and sturdy shoes (no flip-flops or open-toed shoes)

How to Dress in Cool or Wet Weather:

- Layers are best. We can always remove a layer if a child gets too warm but we cannot add what isn't there.
- Rain pants, rain jacket, rubber rain boots, thick socks that will not come off inside the boot (no footies), as well as a hat and waterproof mittens allow children to play comfortably outdoors throughout the fall and spring months.
- Waterproof outdoor gear should be worn for cooler temperatures, even when it isn't raining.

How to Dress in Cold Weather

- Below 50 degrees, we suggest switching from rubber rain boots to insulated rain or winter boots.
- Wool-blend socks
- Snow pants, snow coat, warm hat, waterproof mittens, insulated boots and a neck gaiter are important for cold weather play, even when there is no snow.
- Sweatpants (or similar) worn over regular pants, topped with rain pants, can also provide warmth and protection in cold, wet weather and are a good option for those in-between days when it is cold and raining.

### **Class Cancellations and Weather Conditions**

Since your child's safety is our priority during class, we will not be outdoors in unsafe conditions. Arboretum rangers will alert us via radio if any dangerous weather is in the area. We follow the NOAA wind chill chart for frostbite guidelines. We advise that you dress your child for the weather as specified.

Severe weather may cause cancellation of the program. Appropriate conditions for cancellation include blizzard conditions, extreme cold, significant snowfall, and other severe weather causing flooding or road closures.

**Refund Policy:**

If The Morton Arboretum cancels class for any reason, participants will be issued a prorated or full refund depending on how many days were canceled. Class fees can also be applied to future programs.

**Safety**

All staff in the Children's Garden are fully trained in First Aid and CPR procedures. First Aid equipment will be on hand at all times during class. If your child gets injured while at the program, the instructor will administer first aid and you will be notified at pick-up or by phone after class for minor accidents. For major medical emergencies, we will contact you or your emergency contacts right away to come pick your child up or to alert you to emergency treatment. An accident report will be filled out by a staff member and kept on file.

Firearms are prohibited on Arboretum premises.

**Daily Screening of Illness**

If your child displays obvious signs of illness, a decision will be made on the advisability of the child remaining at the program. The parent or guardian will be notified if the child needs to return home. Your child will be sent home if there is a fever, vomiting, diarrhea, frequent coughing, shortness of breath, lethargy, or if they cannot participate in outdoor activities. Our main goal is to keep the children healthy by preventing unnecessary spreading of illnesses.

Proper hand washing is a simple and extremely effective way to stop the spread of unwanted germs. During class, we practice good hand washing habits before snack and after using the bathroom and after using any shared materials. Portable handwashing stations or hand sanitizer will be available throughout the class.

We rely on every family's help to keep the program environment safe. **Keep your child home if:**

- Your child has a temperature greater than 100°F. Children must be free of a fever for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines, before returning to the program.
- Your child has a cold, excessive drainage, recurrent cough, shortness of breath, or lethargy.
- Your child has an inflammation of the eyes.
- Your child has been vomiting or has had diarrhea.
- Your child has any rashes.
- Your child has lice.

## **Medicine Administration**

The Morton Arboretum employees, volunteers and/or agents administer or supervise the administration of medication in accordance with the routine described under the Administrative Procedures for the Administration of Medication at The Morton Arboretum. Please note that medication must be in an original container with pharmacy instructions. Please refer to the Medical Authorization Form for further details.

The program staff will not administer prescription and non-prescription medications under any circumstances other than the following:

- Medications that may be administered with physician instructions and parental consent include and are limited to inhalers to treat asthma; epinephrine pens, Benadryl, and other similar treatments to address severe allergies and/or allergic reactions.

## **Parent Communication**

Daily updates will be available through Storypark. Parents can access our class storypark via the free smartphone app or on your computer's web browser. Parents can send private instant messages to the instructor through the app or website as well. Parents can also contact the instructor via email, [kneuffer@mortonarb.org](mailto:kneuffer@mortonarb.org) or via phone, 630-725-2033

## **License Exemption**

Please note that the Illinois Child Care Act of 1969 exempts from licensure programs conducted on an organized and periodic basis by organizations, such as The Morton Arboretum, that operate under state and federal charitable organization laws. As such, this program and facility are not licensed or regulated by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Nevertheless, the Arboretum complies with Illinois Department of Human Services Rule 50.820 Staff Qualifications for License Exempt Providers that all staff members have the appropriate level of professional and educational qualifications and experience to work with youth, as well as with Illinois Department of Human Services Rule 50.830 Training Standards for License Exempt Providers which addresses facility staff members' initial orientation and annual trainings. The Department of Children and Family Services also reviews the Arboretum's Emergency Preparedness Manual, employee and volunteer criminal history background investigation procedures, and first aid kit and emergency contact procedures on a biennial basis during its determination of our exempt status.