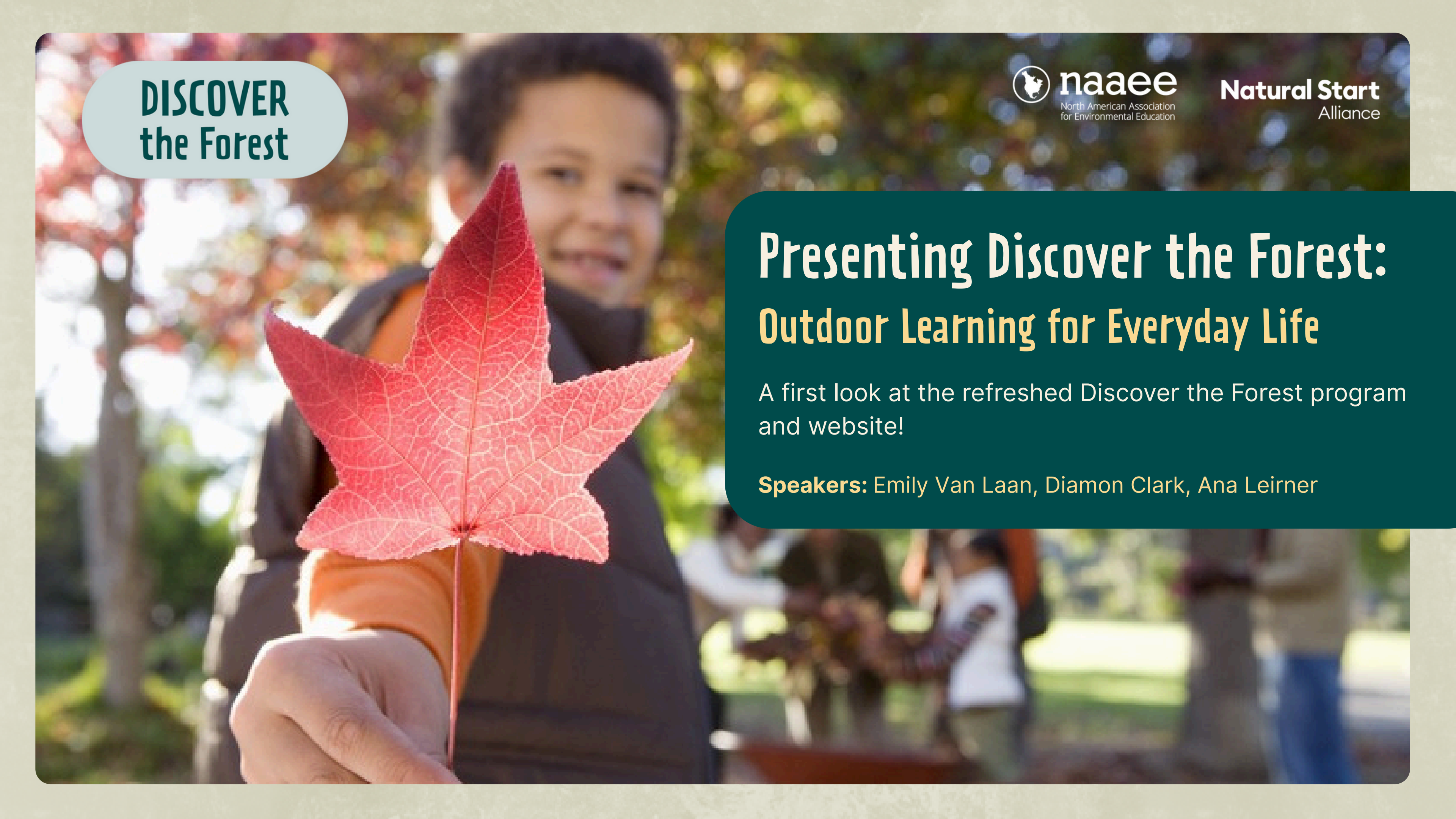




DISCOVER
the Forest



naaee
North American Association
for Environmental Education

Natural Start
Alliance

Presenting Discover the Forest: Outdoor Learning for Everyday Life

A first look at the refreshed Discover the Forest program and website!

Speakers: Emily Van Laan, Diamon Clark, Ana Leirner

Let us know in the chat:

**What is one small way you've
enjoyed nature recently?**





Diamon Clark

Social Media, Discover
the Forest

DISCOVER
the Forest



Emily Van Laan

Manager, Discover the Forest



**Natural
Start**
Alliance



Ana Leirner

Senior Director, Professional
Learning and Education
Products



AGENDA



DISCOVER
the Forest

Home

Things to Do

Tips & Tools

Why Nature Matters

More to Explore

Discover the Neighborhood

NOW

Nature on Your Doorstep

THEN

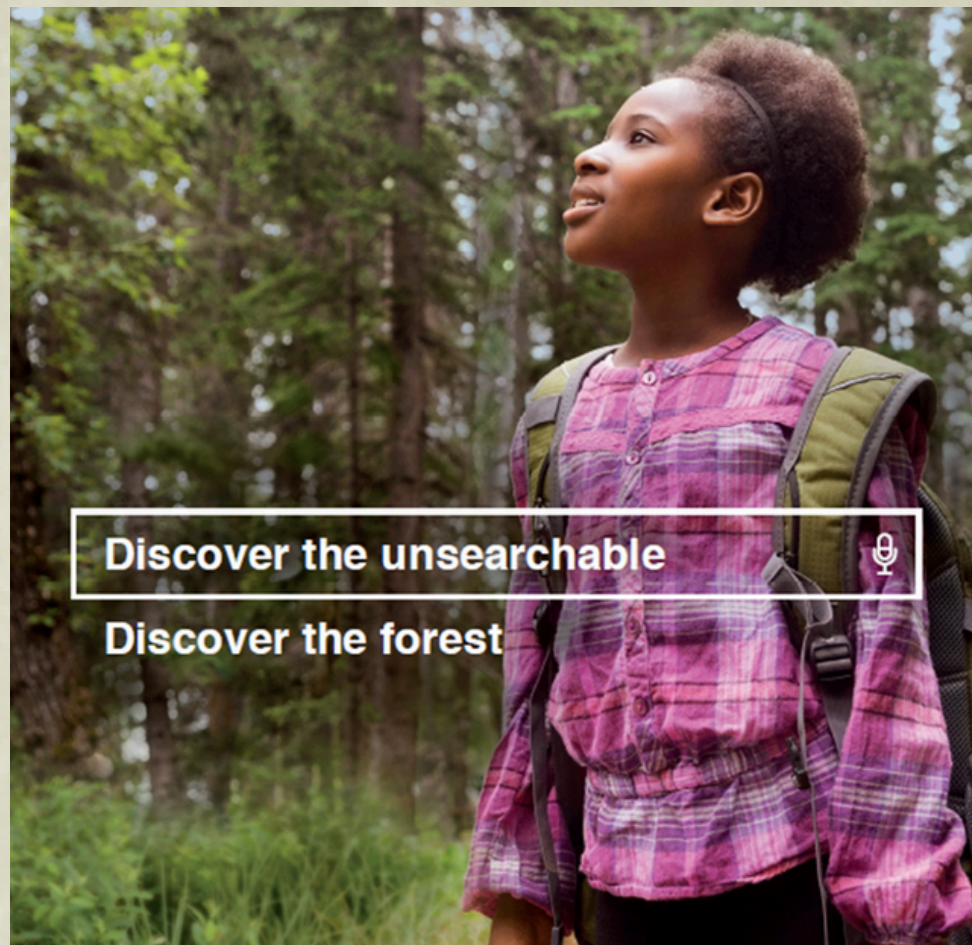
Your Forest is Ready

Make the forest part of your family's story. Find a forest or park near you to get started.



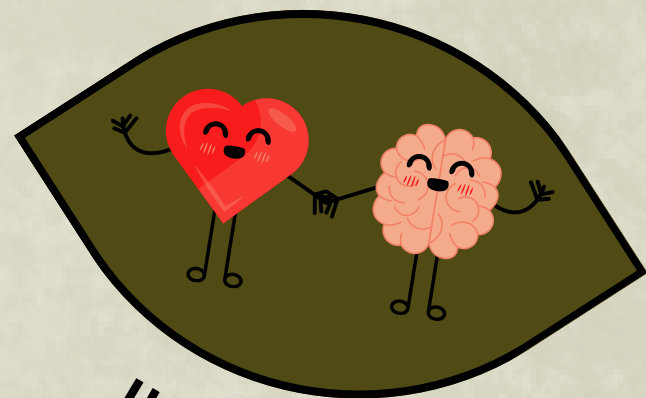
Address, city, or zipcode







Resources for Families



Health Benefits

Family Bonding



Thriving Planet



Focus on Young Children



Resources for Educators

ADVENTURE



National
Forests &
Other Public
Lands



State &
Local Green
Spaces



Neighborhoods



Schoolyards

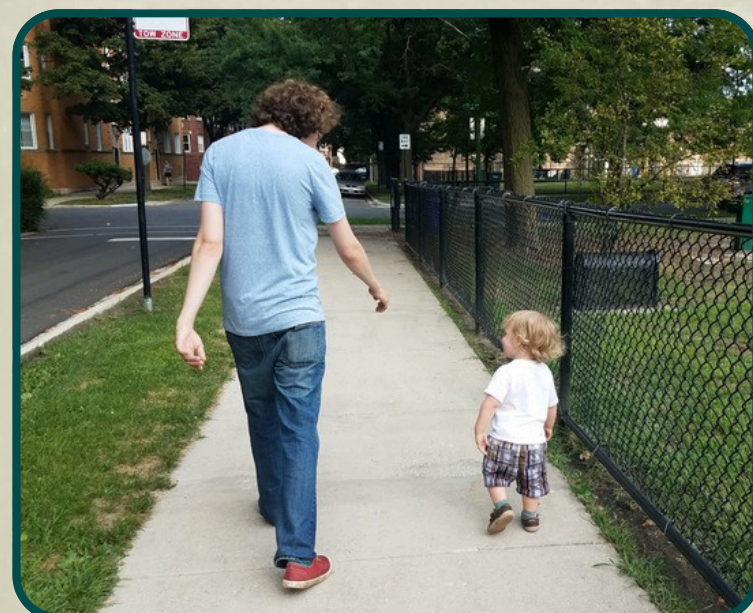


Home

IS A MINDSET



These everyday moments
are the foundation



Minnesota lawmakers fund outdoor education grants in bipartisan effort



Fifth grade students from WestWood Elementary in Prior Lake, Minn., participate in an animal signs class at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center in Finland, Minn. Wolf Ridge and the state's four other outdoor learning schools will get new funds to expand student access. 📸 Erica Dischino for MPR News | 2023

An hour or two of outdoor learning every week increases teachers' job satisfaction

by Swansea University



Outdoor preschool could be good for the mind — and the gut

Feb. 9, 2025 at 6:00 am | Updated Feb. 9, 2025 at 6:00 am



NEWS

From Screen Time to 'Green Time': Going Outside to Support Student Well-Being

Through the expansion of outdoor learning, schools are targeting mental health, academic reengagement and the 'nature gap.'

Experiences of nature boost children's learning: Critical review finds cause-and-effect relationship

NETWORK NEWS

The Equigenic Effect: How Nature Access Can Level the Playing Field for Children



CHILDREN & NATURE NETWORK, FINDING NATURE NEWS | SEPTEMBER 2020

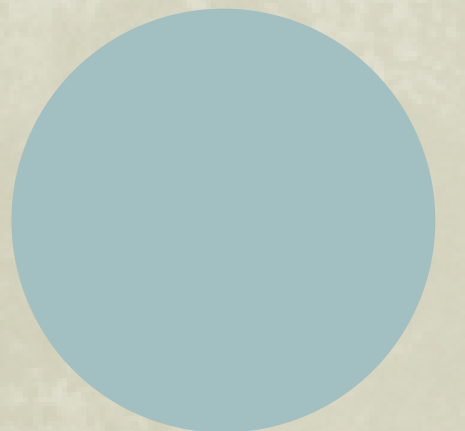
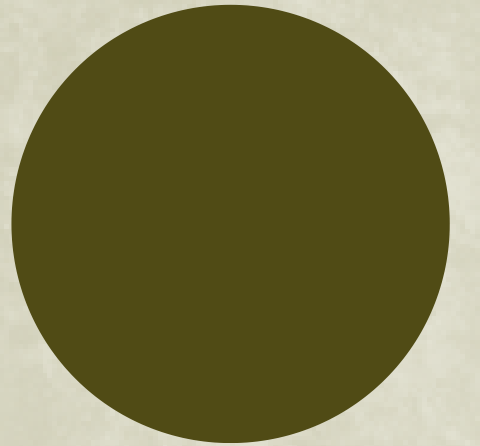
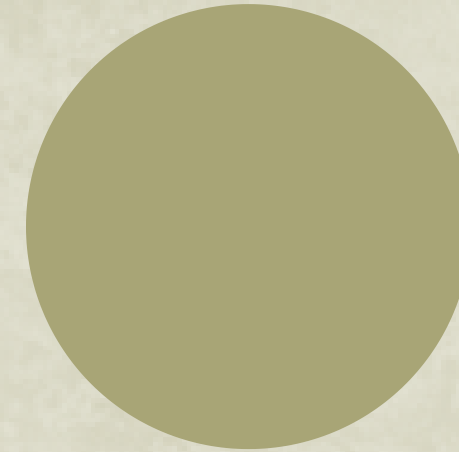
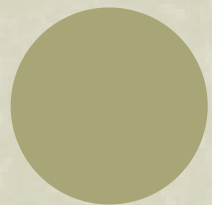
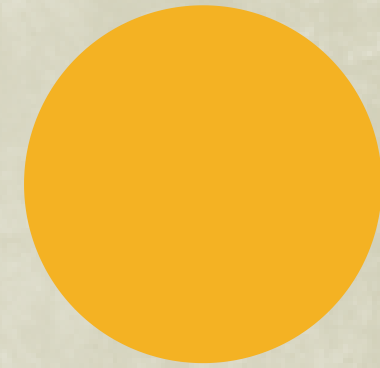
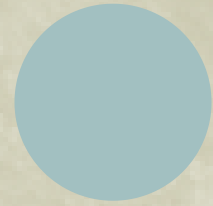
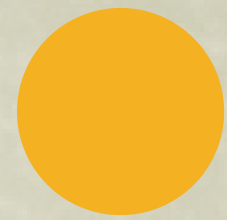
Health & Environment

Connection With Nature Linked To Longer, Healthier Lives

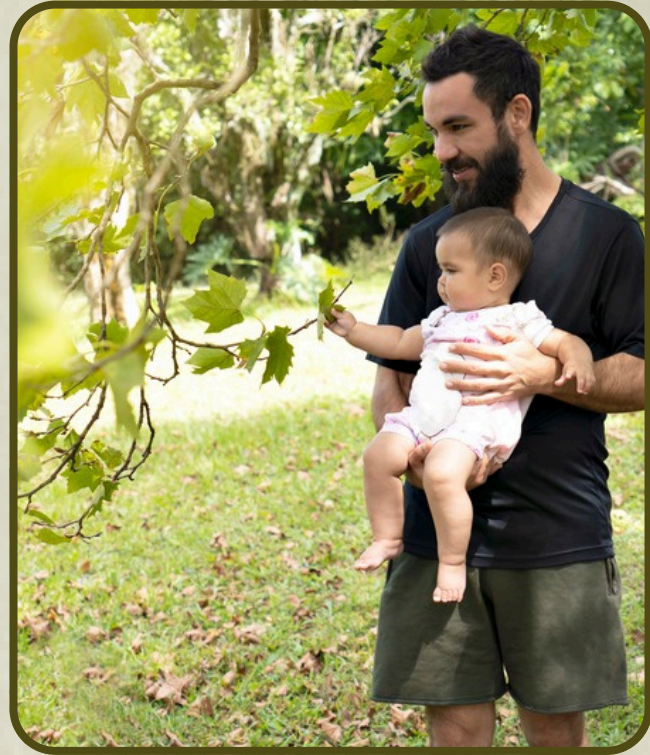
Studies show that greenspaces like parks or trails in urban environments can improve mental and physical health in powerful ways.

New

Experienced



OUR FOCUS



New Parents

Focused on keeping their baby happy, healthy, and safe. Looking for simple ways to bond, boost their own well-being, and break up long days indoors.



Curious Caregivers

Eager to make memories, have fun, and share joyful outdoor moments together.



Busy Families

Juggling full schedules and multiple ages, looking for quick, flexible activities everyone can enjoy without adding stress.



Urban Explorers

Enjoys exploring parks and tree-lined streets to maintain their health and connect to nature without having to travel far.



New-to-Nature Teachers

Eager to support children's learning and development while finding fresh inspiration and managing their own stress.



**"Welcome! You've come
to the right place."**



"I want to do more, but I'm already overwhelmed."

"There isn't any nature near our school."

"Most resources are for kindergarten and older."

"The only outdoor time my child gets at school is a 20-minute recess."

"Children need more support with social-emotional skills."

"I'm unsure what you mean by outdoor learning for babies."

"Existing resources don't fit the needs of the families we serve."

ADVISORS, PARTNERS, & CONSTULANTS



ACCESSIBLE

inclusive of different
abilities

ACHIEVABLE

no special knowledge
or equipment needed

RELATABLE

reflects real world
challenges & solutions

FUN

something you want
to do!

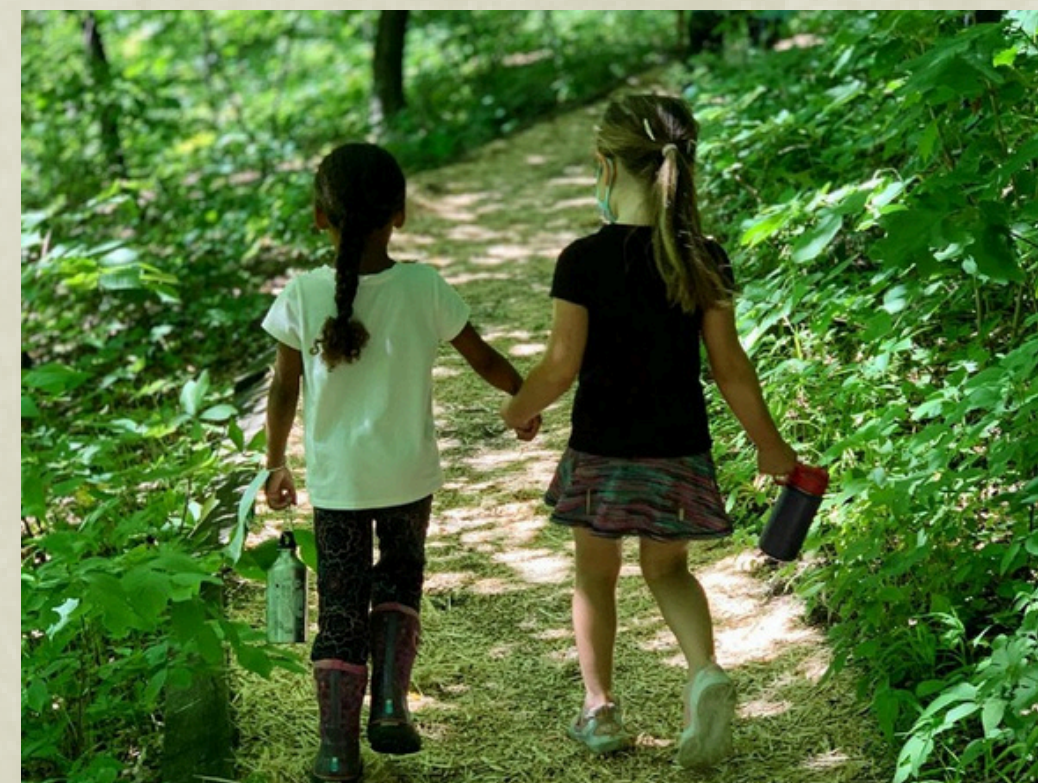


EDUCATION WE NEED FOR THE WORLD WE WANT



naaee

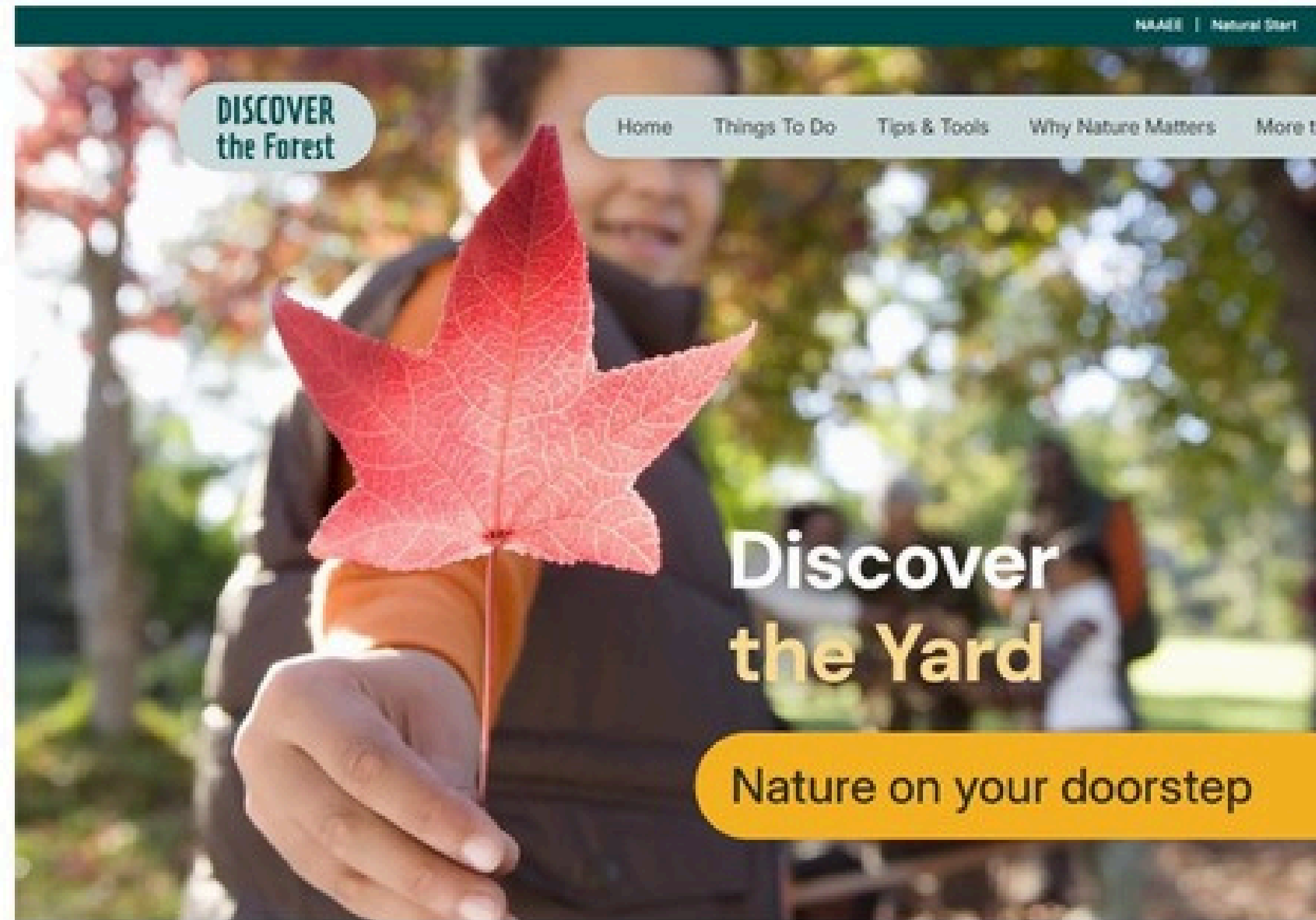
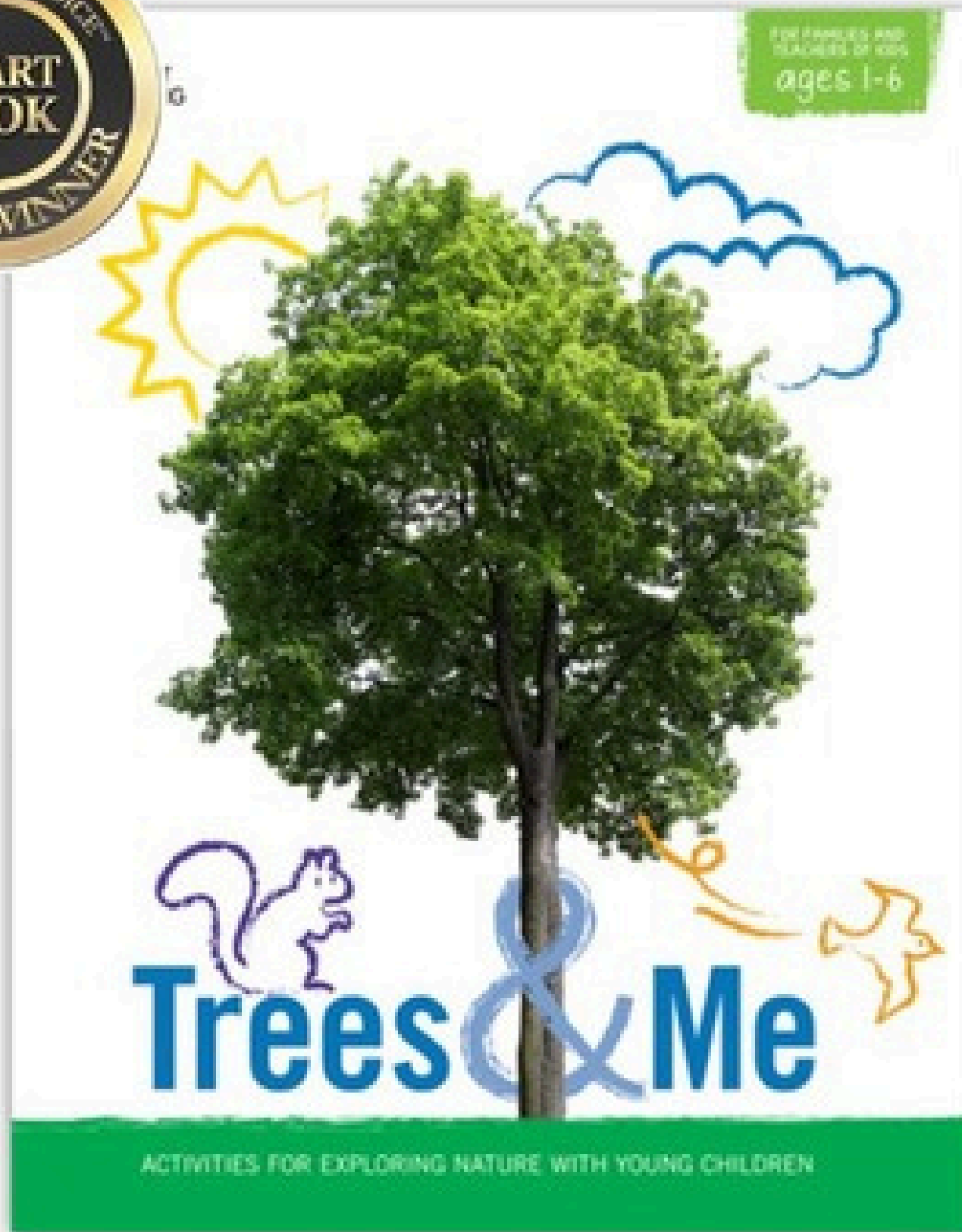
North American Association
for Environmental Education





PLT's Goal:
To advance environmental education,
forest literacy, and career pathways using
trees and forests as windows on the world.

PARTNERSHIPS MAKE SENSE



TREES & ME

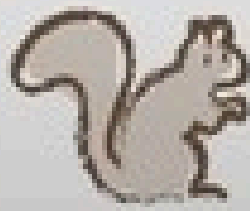


SECTION

1

Exploring Nature with the Senses

- 1 The Shape of Things . . . 14
- 2 Sounds Around 24
- 3 Tree Textures 34
- 4 Follow Your Nose 44

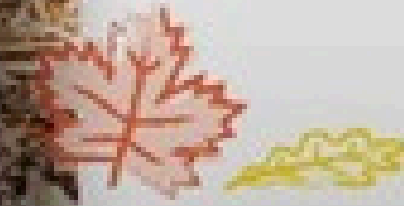


SECTION

2

Experiencing Trees Through Seasons

- 5 Fall for Trees 54
- 6 Evergreens in Winter 64
- 7 Best Buds 74
- 8 My Tree and Me 84

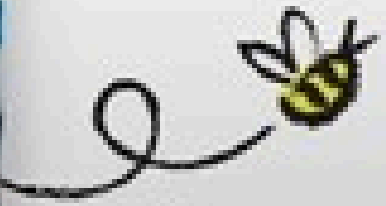


SECTION

3

Meeting Neighborhood Trees

- 9 Parts to Play 98
- 10 Home Tweet Home 110
- 11 Community Explorers . . . 120
- 12 Three Cheers for Trees . . 130



DISCOVER THE FOREST



Discovery Table

🌀 SORT TREE PARTS
Collect a variety of items from trees (e.g., fruits, leaves, seeds, twigs). Label boxes with words and pictures of each tree part. Encourage the children to sort the items into the boxes. Ask, "If you were a tree, what kind of seeds would you have? What is your favorite part of the tree?"

🌀 DESIGN A NEWSPAPER TREE
As an engineering challenge for older children, provide pieces of newspaper, scissors, and tape and invite children to use the materials to build a tree that stands at least three feet tall. Provide a yardstick as a gauge. If they are stumped about how to begin, you might show them how to roll and tape pieces of newspaper to create their structure.

Math and Manipulatives

🌀 BUILD A FELT BOARD TREE
Make felt board tree pieces for children to put together. Provide a variety of sizes and shapes for branches, fruits, leaves, roots, seeds, and trunks to build interesting trees. Make felt board labels for each part. After the children have experimented with the tree parts, invite them to write a recipe for a tree. Using the tree part labels, children can decide how many of each part they need to make a tree (e.g., 1 trunk, 5 branches, 7 roots).

Explore Careers

Invite children to explore a green job that involves tree parts—**FORESTER**. A forester is a professional who takes care of forests or urban forests. Encourage children to pretend to be foresters and look for trees in trouble in the play yard or neighborhood. They can look for scarred trunks, bugs, or rotting bark. If they find a problem, they can check the nearby trees to see if they are also in trouble. (If you find any trees with big problems, like rotting and dead limbs that could fall, check with your local urban forester or an arborist about what to do.)



FORESTER

FROM 130+ PLT EXPERINCES: SELECTION CRITERIA

- Nice Weather + Rainy Day Options
- Conducted Close to Home
- Minimal Preparation
- Little-to-No Materials Needed
- Suitable for Multiple Kids + Ages
- Engages the Body
- One Audacious Option

THINGS TO DO

5 FEATURED ACTIVITIES

- Seek & Find
PLT Activity 1 The Shape of Things
- Sounds All Around
PLT Activity 2 Sounds Around
- Texture Detectives
PLT Activity 3 Tree Textures
- Exploring the Neighbor-wood
PLT Activity 10 Home Tweet Home
- Gifts of Green
PLT Activity 12 Three Cheers for Trees

PLAN AND PLAY



Exploring the Neighbor-wood

Explore a nearby outdoor space to look for signs of how trees are used by plants and animals.



Sounds All Around

Take a walk—or find a quiet place to sit—and listen to the sounds of nature.



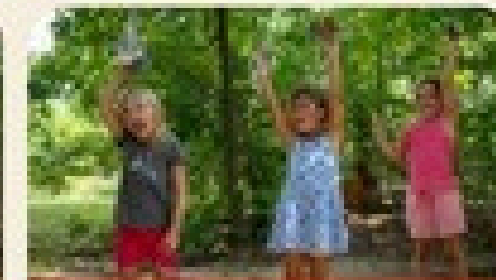
Texture Detectives

Explore natural materials with your sense of touch and practice using descriptive words.



Gifts of Green

Take a slow, mindful walk through nature and use your senses to notice trees, animals, plants, and other natural elements.



Seek & Find

Children build simple binoculars then head outside to search for hidden animals or natural treasures.



Project Learning Tree

Activities and resources to engage children in learning about the environment through the lens of trees and forests.

FOLLOWING
@DiscovertheForest



Creature Features



Activities



Family



Places

Quotes



DISCOVER the Forest

WHAT WE'RE READING



The Magic of the Stump Pile

"The stump pile provided an open-ended and challenging canvas for them to build, test their skills, work together, engage in calculated risks, be creative, and engage in real work. "

Julie Bookwalter, Veronika Vicqueneau

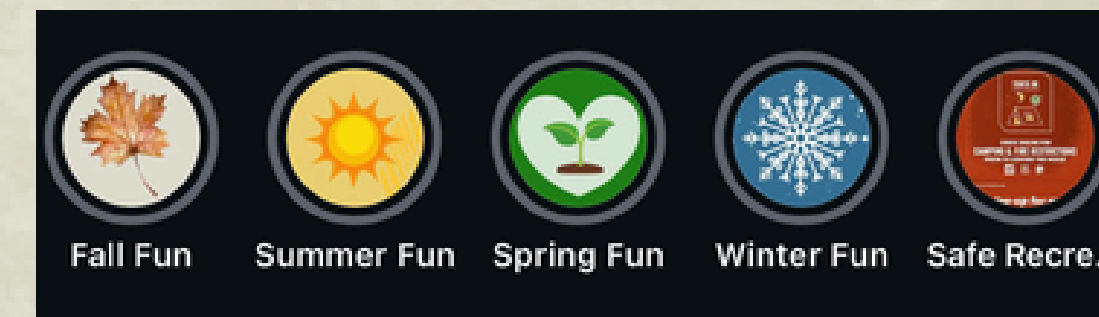
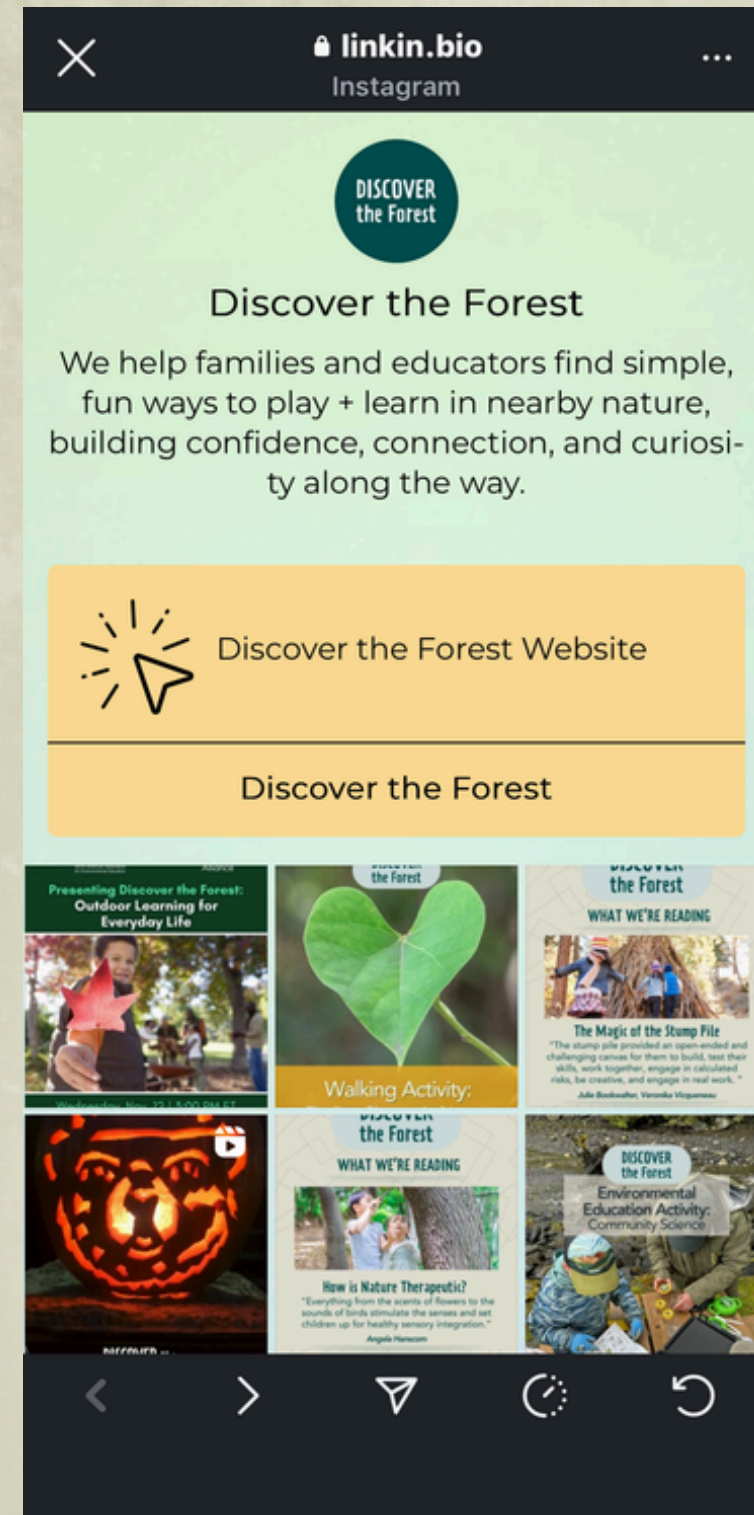
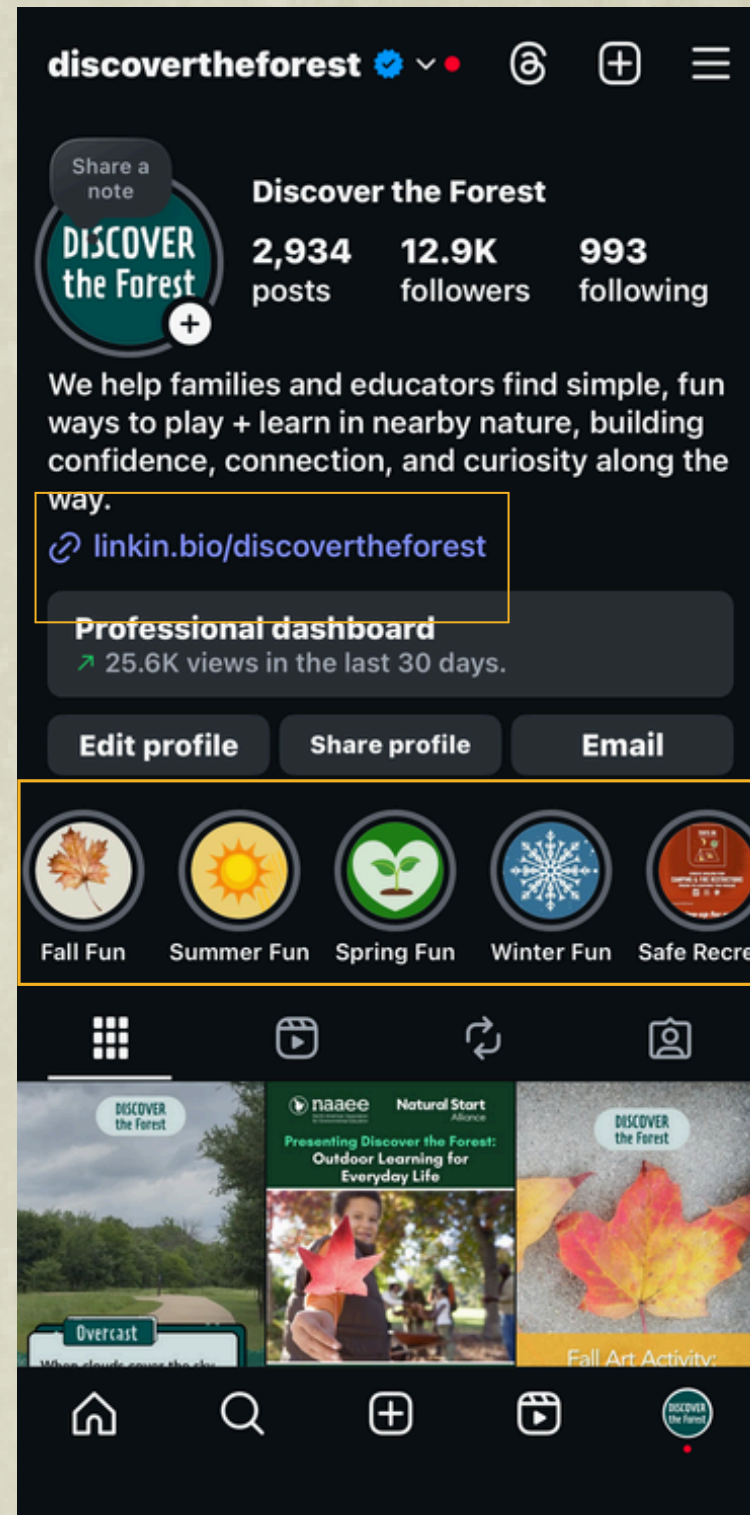




@DiscovertheForest on



Highlights



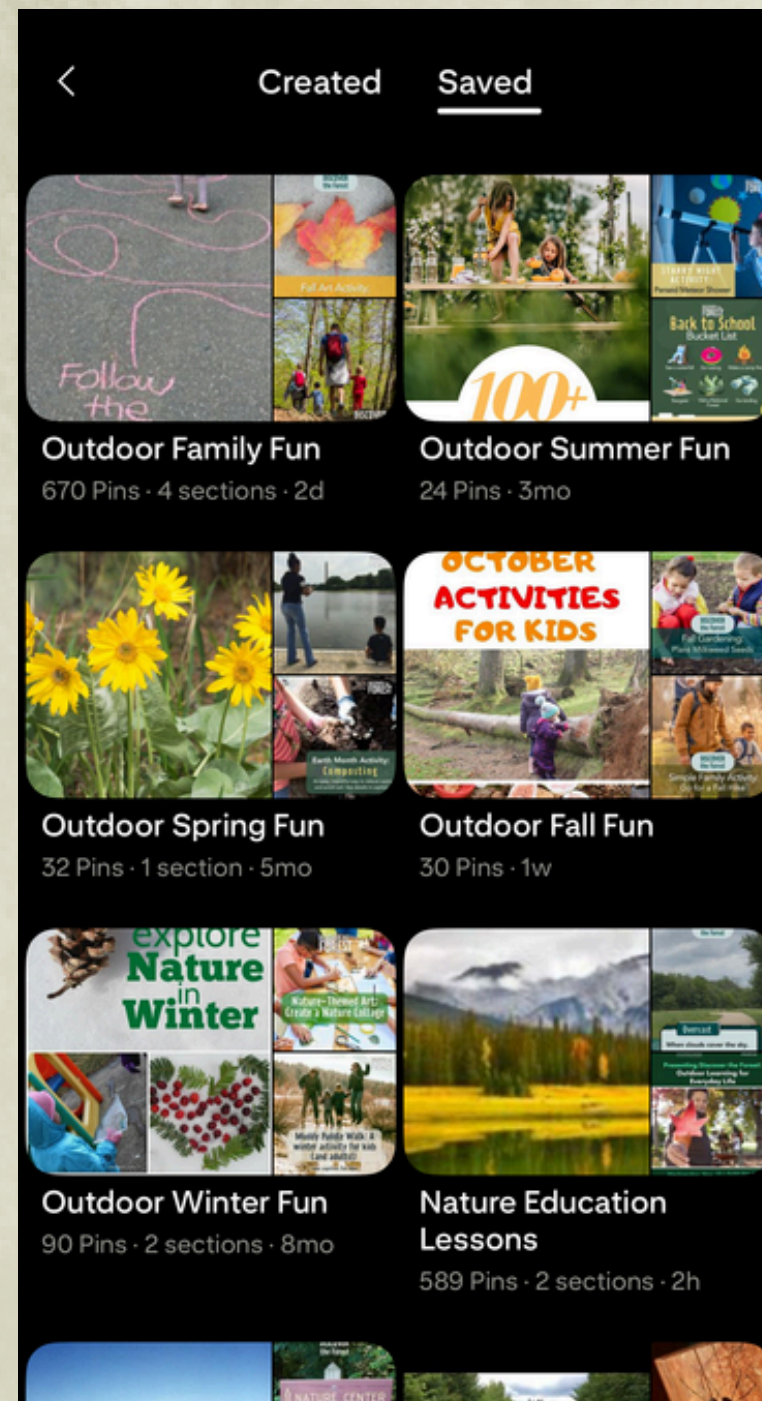
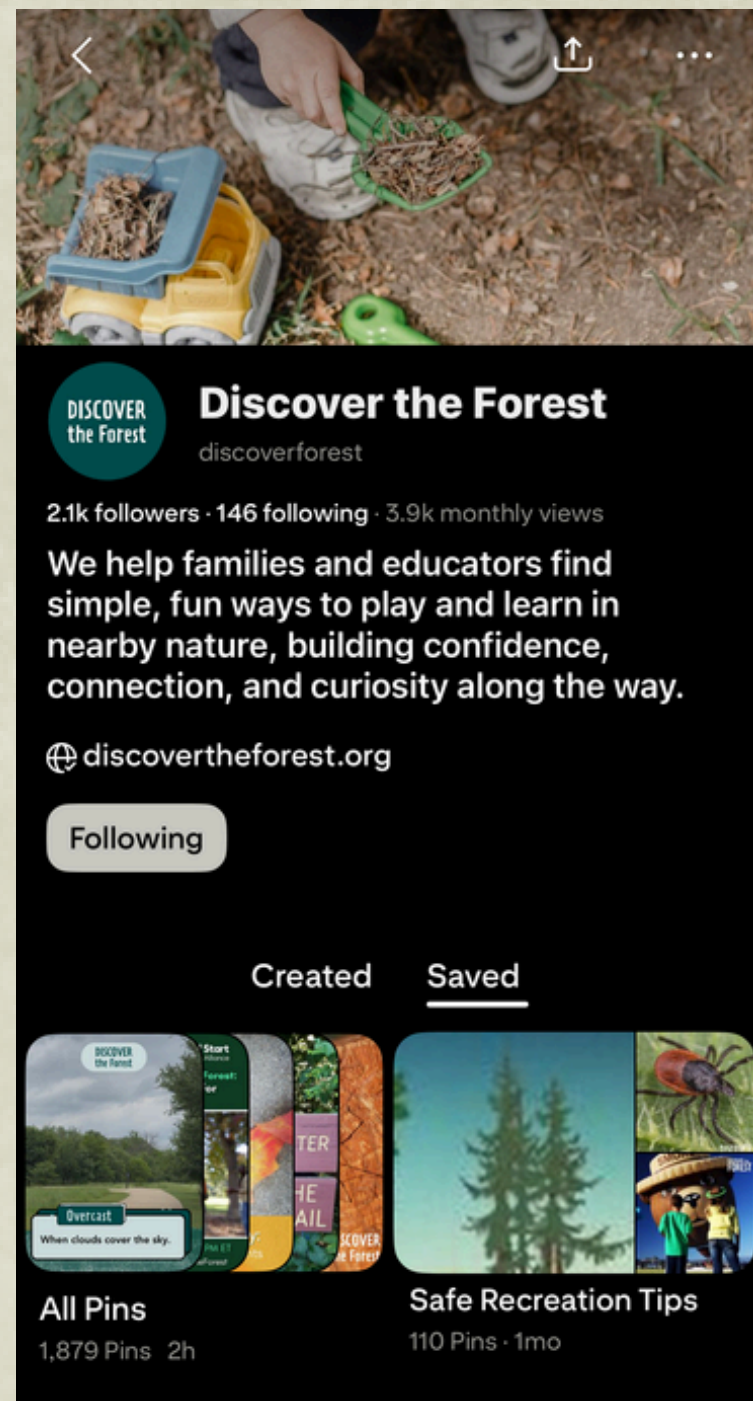
Mini activities
grouped by season,
but worth checking
out any time.

@DiscovertheForest on



10 Boards

- Safe Recreation
- Outdoor Family Fun
- Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter
- Nature Education Lessons
- Forests to Discover
- Wild Wild Wildlife
- Health Benefits of Nature



FOLLOWING
@DiscovertheForest



GET INVOLVED!

Explore the website

Test the activities &
share feedback

Submit ideas for
guides or fast & fun
activities

Share our resources
on social media

Tag us in your social
media posts

Email us at
discovertheforest@naaee.org

Send us photos & quotes

Share what you'd
like to see more of

Share the website
with someone you
know