

Trees Teach Many Important Lessons

by Marilyn Spaw Krock

Spring is a bountiful time for scientific exploration, new life abounds. Take a good close look at the trees around you. Maybe there are butterflies hiding there during the rain! Maybe birds and other creatures hide there, too!

Trees are important to survival for people and animals. Without the oxygen produced by trees the earth's atmosphere could not sustain life as we know it. This is a main reason for concern about destruction of the rain forests. People, animals, and other plants need trees!

Many animals make their homes in trees and in burrows under the roots of trees. Visit a park, sit quietly under a tree. Watch the activity of animal life, insects, too. If it is allowed, find a tree that can be climbed. Children need to experience trees up close and personal!

My sons used to scare me to death with their tree climbing adventures, but their broken arms never came from falling out of a tree! Some trees, especially oaks, just beckon you to climb them.

The tree in our front yard and my daughter have a special relationship. She started climbing it when she was four years old, following her older brothers! It became her special place, her cat would join her. As a teen, she still ascended to her "thinking spot."

Many fruits and nuts come from trees. In Southern California it is relatively easy to find citrus trees with oranges and lemons growing on them. Let children examine the way the blossoms turn into fruit. Look at the different sizes and colors of the fruit as it grows.

As a family outing, at the appropriate time of year, look for farms where you can pick your own fruit or nuts. Children are sure to remember an adventure like that for a very long time.. Particularly popular are cherry and apple orchards.

Shade is another gift from trees. On hot summer days is there anything, short of air conditioning, more refreshing than laying on cool grass in the shade of a tree? Trees help reduce air temperature by absorbing heat. God truly has gifted us with many wonderful kinds of trees.

A popular activity in the early childhood classroom when Spring comes is making a "popcorn tree." After taking a nature walk, we return to the classroom for a very special project. Having looked at signs of new life, especially trees blossoming with white or pink flowers, the children are ready to "create."

Earlier in the week, teachers have filled tuna cans with plaster of Paris, or modeling clay. You can find this at craft supply stores. Place a small branch into the wet plaster, or clay, allowing it two days to harden.

The children can decorate the can with stickers while a batch of popcorn is being popped. Each child gets a small bowl of popcorn and a margarine tub lid with a "glob" of heavy craft glue on it. Then the children go to work making their tree look like the trees outside, full of blossoms.

These trees become centerpieces, while the children start looking for "popcorn" trees all over town! Thank you, God, for trees, and Spring, and popcorn!

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