



Outdoor Education Tip: Water Play

Loose parts play encourages children to move, carry and redesign with materials, so they can interact with the natural world while experimenting with their physical and creative abilities. At Evergreen, we like to say that water is a loose part! Water can be manipulated for creative play in an infinite number of ways. Here are some of our field-tested tips for incorporating water play into home and educational settings. We've also included some ideas for taking it to the next level!

Waterways

One of the most fascinating things about water is how it takes the shape of its container. Allowing kids to explore this phenomenon through digging tunnels and streams in soil can be one of the most engaging aspects of water play. We highly recommend getting hand shovels or trowels to add this element of creation to your water play area!

Vessels

Transporting water opens a world of play possibilities. Be it through water cans, wagons or buckets, providing children with tools to move water from place to place can result in everything from construction projects to imaginary watersheds. Stewardship activities such as watering plants also benefit from having vessels around!

Water Studios

Want a great add on for your mud kitchen? How about a water studio! Putting out pots, pans, trays and tubes in a dedicated water play area can be a great way to encourage experimentation. Can't do this close to a water source? No problem, that's where vessels come in handy, and transporting the water over to the studio is half the fun!

Gradients

Gradients help lift water play to the next level – literally! Hills keep water moving, and when water is moving it can be very engaging. Gradients incorporate very well with other elements such as waterways and vessels and are ideal locations for children to get to work in those water studios!

Getting Messy

Sand, water, dirt – three best friends! The child-led, unstructured play that water supports has many cognitive and well-being benefits, so let's support it by getting out of the way. Ensuring children are dressed in the right clothing for getting incredibly messy will allow them the freedom to shape their own agenda and grow their abilities and imaginations.



Extensions

Looking to take water play to the next level? Here's some more advanced elements we've incorporated into our Children's Garden.

Stock Tanks

The ultimate cost-effective large vessel, stock tanks ensure there is always water for children to draw from. One of the essential tasks of our weekend nature play animators is to keep our stock tanks filled so there is lots of water for children to draw from for their imaginative play.

Aqueducts

Aqueducts are one of the cornerstones of our loose parts set up as they can be used in such a diversity of ways. Along with seeing children create large networks of moving and transporting water, they also are great provocations for height, balancing and construction.

The Archimedes Screw

A tool invented by the ancient Greeks that doesn't seem like it would work until you use it! Evergreen sources our Archimedes screws from Richter in Germany but there are also a lot of great tutorials on how these can be made with everyday materials at home.

