

#5.3 – Trees

Before You Begin

- Review Introduction and Preparation for the Focus Area – Things that Grow.
- Refer to Developing Weekly Activity Plans for Adventures for Toddlers for information on how to develop your plans.

Big Ideas

Here are some big ideas about things that grow that you can help toddlers explore:

- Trees are all around us; in our yard, in the park, on the playground.
- Trees give us shade.
- We can have fun in the shade of trees.
- Birds live in trees.

Materials to Collect and Make

Featured Books

Note: *Developers were unable to locate any books about trees that are appropriate for toddlers.*

Key: (BB) – Available in Board Book only
(+BB) – Also available in Board Book

Books to Make

I Like Trees (See Attachment: [I Like Trees](#))

If I Were a Blue Bird (See Attachment: [If I Were a Blue Bird](#))

Storytelling Figures

- Storytelling figures (felt or magnetic) or stick puppets for the book, *If I Were a Blue Bird* (See Attachment: [If I Were a Blue Bird Storytelling Figures](#))

Additional Materials

- Pine needles, pine cones, pieces of bark, a small branch with leaves, small sticks/branches
- Feely bag or box
- Small tub, basket/box/bag
- Simple toys such as trucks, cars, plastic dishes and washable dolls stored in basket with cover
- Large sheet, blanket or vinyl tablecloth
- Tree with branches, five yellow birds for use on a felt or magnetic board
- Ten green leaves and brown tree trunk with branches for use on a felt or magnetic board
- Pictures of individual pine cones, individual apples
- Picnic basket and unbreakable dishes

Book List

Books selected from Classroom Library

Teacher Note: *Developers were unable to find any books about trees that were appropriate for toddlers.*

Reading Books with Toddlers

Teacher Note: *Review the section in **Curriculum Tips and Techniques** on Reading Books with Children, for suggestions on how to use books with children.*

Learning Goals:

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language)

EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences

ST3.1 Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things, the earth's environment, and physical objects and materials (nature and the environment)

Book: *I Like Trees (OT)* (See Attachment: [I Like Trees](#))

First Reading of *I Like Trees*

- Collect items such as pine cones, pieces of bark and a small branch with leaves. Place the items in a bag.
- Say to the children, "I have some things in this bag that I need your help with."
- Bring out one item at a time and invite children who join you to name the items.
- Ask the children, "Where do you think this pine cone and this bark and this branch came from?" Guide them to see that all of the items came from a tree.
- Involve children in discussing trees. Ask questions such as, "Who has trees in their yard? Do you ever play under the tree? Do you help rake leaves that fall from trees?" If there are trees that children can see from your room, ask them to look out the window at the trees.
- Show the cover of the book and invite children to tell you what they see on the cover.
- Say the name of the book and say, "Let's find out why we like trees."
- Read each page and allow children time to comment. On the first page, point out the shaded area.
- Review the book by showing each page and inviting children to describe what is happening on that page.

Teacher Note: *If children say the items in the bag came from the ground, for example, say, "Yes, I found them on the ground, but they came from a tree."*

Second Reading of *I Like Trees* (OT)

- Collect some simple toys such as small trucks and cars and plastic dishes and washable dolls that can easily be carried outdoors. Include a couple of books. Store the toys in a basket or tub with a cover so that children cannot see them. Place the container under a tree.
- Provide something to cover the ground such as a large sheet, blanket or vinyl tablecloth on which children can sit for story time.
- Explain to children that “When we go outside, we’re going to read a book under our special tree. You can all sit on the sheet as you listen to the story.”
- Guide the children to sit on the sheet.
- Show the cover and read the title.
- Read each page and allow children time to comment. Call attention to the page about reading a story under a tree and say, “That’s what we’re doing. We’re reading a story under a tree.”
- Follow up by showing the page about playing under a tree.
- Bring out the container with toys and invite children to say what they think is in it. For example, say, “I have some special things in this basket. They are things we can play with under our tree. What do you think they might be?” Accept all answers.
- Take toys out one at a time and invite children to say what they might do with the toy.
- Place the dishes and dolls and the books on the sheet and locate the small vehicles in another area.
- Guide children to select where they want to play.
- Sit on the sheet and begin to look at a book. Read with children who join you.
- Continue this experience only as long as children remain interested, then involve them in picking up the toys before moving on to another area of the playground.

Teacher Notes:

- *Provide a sufficient number of toys to take outdoors for the number of children in your group, plus a couple of extras so that children have choices.*
- *Consider forming two groups for this experience if there are two caregivers with the children. This will make it much easier to read a story to the children and to avoid conflict over toys.*
- *Place the basket of toys under the tree when children go outdoors on a hot day. Spread a sheet or cloth on the ground. Notice if children seem to be getting overheated and suggest that they play in the shade of the tree.*
- *Sing songs under the tree.*
- *Have snack or a picnic lunch under a tree.*

Book: *If I Were a Blue Bird*

First Reading of *If I Were a Blue Bird* (YT & OT) (See Attachment: [If I Were a Blue Bird](#))

- Go to the book area and say to children, “I’m going to read a book about a blue bird.”
- Show the cover and read the title.
- Ask children if they have ever seen a blue bird. Where did they see it?
- Read the first page and ask children what they think the blue bird will see. Accept all answers.
- Turn the page and read “I’d see a red cow looking at me.”
- Continue with the reading, inviting children to guess what they think the blue bird will see on the next page.
- Read the last page and, then point to each animal and invite the children to name it. Identify animals by color if children do not do so. For example, “That’s a yellow duck.”

Teacher Note: *Consider asking Young Toddlers to point to a specific animal. For example, say, “Brennan, can you find the pink pig?”*

Second Reading of *If I Were a Blue Bird* (YT & OT)

- Go to book area and say to children, “I’m going to read a book about a blue bird and all of the animals she sees.”
- Show the cover and read the title.
- Read each page, inviting children to predict which animal the blue bird will see.
- Read the last page and invite children to name each animal.

Extension:

- Involve children in making the sound of each animal in the book. This can be done as you read each page and/or on the last page of the book.

Language, Literacy and Cognitive Materials and Activities

Learning Goals:

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language in child’s home language (*vocabulary and language comprehension, follows directions*)

EL2.1 Notices and manipulates the sounds of language (*rhyme*)

MT1.1 Demonstrates number sense and an understanding of quantity (*number names and count sequence*)

MT1.2 Explores combining and separating groups (numerical operations) (*addition and subtraction*)

Ten Little Leaves (OT)

(Sing to tune of “Ten Little Indians” and hold up appropriate number of fingers while counting and singing)

One little, two little, three little leaves,
Four little, five little, six little leaves.
Seven little, eight little, nine little leaves.
Ten little leaves are on a tree.

Extension:

- Make ten green leaves and a brown tree trunk with branches from cardstock that you laminate or cover with clear self-adhesive paper. Back the figures with either a strip of felt or a magnetic strip.
- Place the tree on a felt or magnetic board before you begin singing the song.
- Place leaves one at a time on the tree branches as you sing the song.

Extension:

- Invite children to place the leaves on the tree when you feel they are ready for this.

Teacher Note: *Leaves and tree trunk and branches can be made from felt.*

Five Yellow Birds (OT)

(Make appropriate motions to go with the words)

I looked up in a big oak tree
(Pretend to look up in tree)
And saw five yellow birds looking down at me.
(Hold up 5 fingers)
One yellow bird sang a pretty song,
(Pretend to sing as you hold up one finger)
Flapped his yellow wings
(Flap arms)
And then he was gone.
(Fly one hand away)

I looked up in a big oak tree
And saw four yellow birds looking down at me.
One yellow bird sang a pretty song,
Flapped his yellow wings
And then he was gone.

I looked up in a big oak tree
And saw three yellow birds looking down at me.
One yellow bird sang a pretty song,
Flapped his yellow wings
And then he was gone.

I looked up in a big oak tree
And saw two yellow birds looking down at me.
One yellow bird sang a pretty song,
Flapped his yellow wings
And then he was gone.

I looked up in a big oak tree
And saw one yellow bird looking down at me.
One yellow bird sang a pretty song,
Flapped his yellow wings
And then he was gone.

I looked up in a big oak tree
And saw no yellow birds looking back at me.
No yellow birds singing a pretty song,
Nor flapping their wings
Because they're all gone.

Extension:

- Make a tree with branches and five yellow birds. Back the figures with either a strip of felt or a magnetic strip.
- Place the tree on a storyboard. Add the five yellow birds.
- Remove one bird at a time as you say the rhyme with the children.
- Ask children if they would like the birds to come back to the tree. If they say, "Yes," add one bird at a time, counting them from one to five.

Teacher Note:

- *Invite one child at a time to either remove or add a bird to the tree when you feel children are ready for this.*
- *Continue the motions as described in the first verse for the remainder of the verses, changing the number of fingers to match the number of birds in each verse.*

The Apple Tree (YT & OT)

Way up high in an apple tree, (Hold hands above head, form circles with thumb &
Two red apples smiled down at me. forefinger of each hand. Smile.)

I shook that tree as hard as I could (Put hands out as if on a tree and shake)
Down came those apples, (Hands above head and lower to ground)

And Mmmmmmmmm were they good. (Rub tummy)

Learning Goals:

EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences

Planned Activity: Storytelling (OT)

If I Were a Blue Bird

(See Attachment: [If I Were a Blue Bird Storytelling Figures](#))

How to begin:

- Make either felt or magnetic storytelling figures or stick puppets for the story. Laminate or cover the figures with clear self-adhesive paper for durability.
- Read the book with children several times so they are familiar with the characters and the order of events.
- Use the storytelling figures to tell the story.
- Involve children in placing figures on the storyboard or holding stick puppets when you feel they can do this.

Learning Goals:

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language)

MT2.1 Uses classification and patterning skills (classification)

Planned Activity: Leaf Match (YT & OT)

Materials: construction paper leaf shapes

How to begin:

- Make large leaf shapes from 9" x 12" construction paper of different colors. Make two leaves of each color. Laminate or cover them with clear self-adhesive paper for durability.
- Invite a small group of toddlers to join you at a low table or in an area on the floor that is out of the flow of traffic.
- Keep one set of the leaves and invite each child to select a leaf from the other set.
- Say to children, "I have leaves that are the same color as your leaves. I'm going to show you a leaf and ask who has a leaf just like mine." Show one of the leaves and say, "This is a red leaf. Who has a red leaf just like mine?"
- Comment when a child matches your leaf. Say, "Yes, Jamie, your leaf is red just like mine." Encourage children to say the color of the leaf.
- Continue the game until all of the leaves have been matched.

Learning Goals:**PH2.2 Adjusts grasp and coordinates movements to use tools** (*variety of tools*)**ST3.1 Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things, the earth's environment, and physical objects and materials** (*living things*)**Planned Activity: Feeding the Birds (YT & OT)****Materials:** bird feeder, bird seed, small measuring cup, tray or newspaper**How to begin:**

- Locate a bird feeder and purchase a small bag of bird seed.
- Put the bird seed in a container that will allow the children to easily scoop it out.
- Place the bird feeder, bird seed in the container and measuring cup on a tray or newspaper on a low table.
- Invite two or three children at a time to join you in adding bird seed to the feeder. Let other children know that they will have a turn adding bird seed to the feeder.
- Invite one child at a time to use the measuring cup to scoop up the bird seed and add it to the feeder.
- Allow all children who wish to be involved in the experience a turn.
- Hang the feeder in a tree on the playground or in a tree that children can observe from their room.
- Suggest that children observe to see if any birds come to the feeder.
- Call attention to the colors and sizes of the birds. For example, say, "That's a little brown bird eating at the feeder. We call that bird a sparrow."

Extensions:

- Involve children in refilling the bird feeder when it becomes empty.
- Take photos of the birds at the feeder. Involve children in looking at the photos and talking about the birds. Post the pictures on the wall at children's eye level. Observe to see if children look at the photos. Join them and make comments such as, "That's the red bird that came to our feeder. The red bird is called a cardinal."
- Post on the wall pictures of birds that you have observed coming to the feeder.

Teacher Notes:

- *Notice the types of birds you see outdoors and purchase bird seed that appeals to these birds.*
- *Placing newspaper or a tray on the table will make it easier to clean up any bird seed that might spill as children scoop and pour.*
- *For younger toddlers, cut off the bottom half of a plastic milk carton or a liter drink bottle. Invert the top half and use as a funnel to make filling the feeder easier for the children.*

Safety Note: *Make sure that the children wash hands after they help fill the bird feeder.*

Self, Social and Emotional Activities

Learning Goals:

SE3.1 Shows awareness of self as unique individual (*sense of identity, preferences*)

ST3.1 Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things, the earth's environment, and physical objects and materials (*nature and the environment*)

Planned Activity: Our Special Tree (YT & OT)

How to begin:

- Locate a tree on the playground or in an area where it is safe to take your children.
- Plan a variety of activities related to the tree. Examples follow.
- Visit the tree with the children. Invite them to touch the bark of the tree and talk about how it feels.
- Look for birds in the tree.
- Encourage children to relate their experiences with trees.
- Join hands, make a circle and walk around the tree.
- Read a story with children under the tree.
- Explain to children that they will help write a story about the tree and that you would like to take their photo with the tree.
- Discuss with the children some of things they might do for their special photo with the tree. For example, they might stand next to the tree, or sit under it. They might hug the tree or look at a book under it.
- Take a photo of each child and the tree with the pose they choose.
- Take a photo of all of the children and the tree.
- Create a small photo album / book entitled: *Our Special Tree*.
- Use the group photo for the cover of the album.
- Have a page for each child which describes the photo as follows: This is Richard. He is standing next to our special tree.
- Use the group photo for the last page as follows: This is all of us under our special tree.

Extensions:

- Read the book with the children and place it in the book area for them to look at on their own.
- Invite children to share the book with their families.
- Consider creating another book as follows: Take photos of the children as they participate in various group experiences under their special tree; for example, singing a song, having a picnic, reading a book, and playing a game.
- Have a page for each experience that describes the photo as follows: We are singing a song under our special tree.

Sensory and Art Materials and Activities

Learning Goals:

PH2.1 Demonstrates fine-motor strength, control and coordination (*hand-eye coordination*)

CA2.1 Explores, manipulates, creates, and responds to a variety of art media (*exploration of art*)

Planned Activity: Sticky Wall (OT)

Materials: leaves, small sticks/branches, pieces of bark

How to begin:

- Collect leaves, small sticks/branches and pieces of bark.
- Place these items on a tray.
- Attach a long piece of self-adhesive paper to the wall with the sticky side out. Make sure paper is securely attached in place and at toddlers' level.
- Invite children to stick nature items to the sticky wall.
- Talk with the children about the items that they choose to stick on the wall. For example, say, "Jeanne, you stuck a piece of rough bark to the wall."

Teacher Note: *Supervise this experience so that children don't put items in their mouth.*

Learning Goals:

CD3.1 Uses reasoning and planning ahead to solve problems and reach goals (*problem solving*)

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language) (*follows directions*)

ST1.1 Engages in the scientific process to collect, analyze, and communicate information

ST3.1 Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things, the earth's environment, and physical objects and materials (*physical objects and materials*)

Planned Activity: Things that Grow on Trees Feely Bag (YT & OT)

Materials: feely bag or box, pine cone, piece of bark, small tree branch with leaves or pine needles

How to begin:

- Invite an older toddler to join you at a table or on the floor in an area that is out of the flow of traffic.
- Show the child the pine cone, piece of bark and small branch. Allow the child to explore the items. Name and use words to describe the items. Say, for example, "Feel this piece of bark. It feels rough. Now feel the pine cone. It feels prickly."
- Place the items in the feely bag or box.
- Invite the child to put his/her hand in the bag and feel the item. Say to the child, "Can you pull out the pine cone?"
- Comment on what the child has done. For example, if he/she pulls out the pine cone, say, "Yes, Jared, you pulled out the pine cone. It feels prickly, doesn't it?" If the child pulls out the piece of bark instead, say, "Jared, you pulled out the piece of bark. It feels rough, doesn't it? Can you reach in again and pull out the pine cone? Remember it feels real prickly."

Extensions:

- Adapt the experience for **Young Toddlers** by having them reach into the bag, pull out an item and name it. If they are unable to name the item, say, "Eric, you pulled out a pine cone. Feel how prickly that pine cone is."

Food Activities

Learning Goals:

SE1.2 Interacts with peers

PH3.1 Demonstrates interest in engaging in healthy eating habits and making nutritious food choices
(exploration of food experiences)

LD2.1 Uses increasingly complex vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure (in child's home language) *(expressive vocabulary)*

ST3.1 Demonstrates knowledge of the characteristics of living things, the earth's environment, and physical objects and materials *(nature and the environment)*

Planned Activity: Picnic Under Our Special Tree (OT)

Materials: sandwiches cut in half and stored in a self-close plastic bag, small containers of juice with straws, small non-breakable plates, napkins, picnic basket, tray, plate for sandwiches, sheet or vinyl cloth to cover the ground, small plastic bag for garbage

How to begin:

- Ask a co-worker to spread the sheet on the ground before you and the children go outdoors.
- Show the children the page in the book, *I Like Trees*, about having a picnic.
- Explain to children that all of you will have a picnic under their special tree.
- Involve the children in preparing for the picnic by inviting them to place some of the items in the basket. For example, you can have each child's name on his or her container of juice and invite the child to place the container in the basket.
- Involve children in naming the different items as they are placed in the basket.
- Invite children to talk about their previous picnic experiences and respond to what they say. "Nikki said she and her brother went on a picnic in the park with their daddy. Do you remember some of the things you took on your picnic, Nikki?"
- Wash your hands and help children wash their hands before going outdoors.
- Let children know that they are to sit on the sheet when they arrive at their special tree.
- Place the plates and napkins on the tray and invite each child to take one.
- Place the sandwiches on the plate and invite each child to take a sandwich.
- Read the names on the juice containers and give each child his or her container of juice.
- Prepare your plate and you and the children enjoy the picnic.
- Involve children in returning plates to the tray and putting napkins and empty juice containers in plastic bag.

Teacher Notes:

- *Prepare sandwiches to meet nutrition requirements for your program or add other items that will be easy for children to eat outdoors.*
- *Guide the children to take the sandwich closest to them so they do not touch other sandwiches on the plate.*
- *Caregivers and children should always wash hands before participating in a food experience.*

Movement, Music and Gross Motor Activities

Learning Goal:

CA1.1 Explores through listening, singing, creating, and moving to music (*exploration of music and movement*)

Planned Activity: Leaf Dance (YT & OT)

Materials: leaves from **Leaf Match** Experience, CD with music that suggests swaying, twisting and twirling, CD player

How to begin:

- Place leaves in a container such as a basket.
- Play a CD, select a leaf and begin to sway with the leaf.
- Invite children to select a leaf and join you in dancing with the leaves.

Learning Goal:

PH1.3 Demonstrates gross-motor manipulative skills (*throwing*)

Planned Activity: Pine Cone Toss (OT)

Materials: pine cones and a small tub, basket or box

How to begin:

- Place a small tub or box next to a wall.
- Begin to toss pine cones into the container.
- Invite children who join you to take turns tossing the pine cone into the container.
- Assist children to be successful by helping them adjust their distance from the container.

Transition Times

Learning Goal:

CD2.2 Shows flexibility in adjusting thinking and behavior to different contexts (*adjusting behavior to match context*)

One Brown Pine Cone

Materials: pictures of pine cones backed with felt or magnetic strips, felt board

- Say the following rhyme as you take a pine cone from the board and touch a child's head with it to send the child to the next activity such as washing hands or getting a jacket:

One little pine cone
Oh, so brown
Touched Susan's head
As it fell to the ground.

- Adapt the rhyme as follows to send more than one child at a time to the next activity:

Two little pine cones
Oh, so brown
Touched Susan and Andrew's heads
As it fell to the ground.

Extension:

- Substitute The Apple Tree rhyme and two felt or magnetic apples for pine cones.

Teacher Note: Consider using two real pine cones if they are available.

Match This Leaf

- Use leaves from the **Leaf Match** experience.
- Keep one set of the leaves and invite children to select a leaf.
- Show your leaf and say, "I'm looking for someone who has a red leaf just like mine. Yes, Leandra, you have a red leaf just like mine. Give me your red leaf and go with Ms. Betty to wash your hands for lunch."
- Continue this until each child has been transitioned.

Extension:

- Show two leaves of different colors if you wish to transition more than one child at a time.

Teacher Notes:

- *Adapt other finger plays previously listed as transitions to move children from one activity or place to another.*
- *Transition activities are appropriate for older toddlers.*

Family Connection and Engagement

- Invite families to collect and bring to the center magazines or catalogs that contain pictures of trees.
- Suggest that families plan experiences with their child under a tree in their yard, in the neighborhood or community park: a picnic, reading a book, or looking for birds, for example. If they take photos of the event, ask them to share the photos with you so that you share them with the other children.
- Plan a family picnic under your special tree. Invite families to join you and the children for a story, a song and a picnic lunch.