

Miss Maple's



Nature House

Where kids, plants, and animals live happily ever after.

BENEFITS, RISKS, and HAZARDS

303 Naples Rd.

PO Box 101

Harrison, ME 04040

(207) 615-9398

missmaplesnaturehouse@gmail.com

Wendy Gallant, Director

Macy Manchester, Asst. Director

BENEFITS, RISKS, and HAZARDS

- ♣ Purpose & Use
- ♣ Safety rules
- ♣ Maintaining Current Information
- ♣ Benefits of Outdoor Play & Learning
- ♣ Daily Site Assessment form
- ♣ Hazards
- ♣ Risk Based Assessment (RBA) for MMNH
- ♣ Notable (Poisonous) Fauna on Site
- ♣ Site Map

See Also **ENROLLMENT PACKET**

See Also **FAMILY HANDBOOK & POLICIES**



UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS, RISKS, AND HAZARDS OF OUTDOOR PLAY AND LEARNING



A guide to understanding the site-specific hazards, risks, and benefits of outdoor learning and play at *Miss Maple's Nature House* in Harrison, Maine

WELCOME!

We have crafted this important resource to help you understand the many ways we protect children, staff, and the land we tread upon. We want everyone to thrive outdoors, which requires a commitment to thoughtful planning and safety routines. As you read through this resource, we hope it illuminates the thorough preparation of staff and the immense ways in which nature is your child's third teacher.

In Wonder,

Miss Maple's Nature House team

'Miss Wendy' Gallant, Director

'Miss Macy' Manchester, Asst. Director



OUR COMMITMENT to YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICAL SAFETY and EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

This Section is a compilation of detailed information for parents and staff to address the most significant risks and benefits of outdoor learning and play while at *Miss Maple's Nature House*.

"Benefits of Outdoor Play and Learning" section includes current peer-reviewed research, references, and testimonials to demonstrate why children benefit from a nature-based program. The "Hazards" section includes dangers and risks that we may, or likely will, encounter outdoors. The "Risk Benefit Assessment (RBA)" is provided to demonstrate potential for harm and ways we can prevent and mitigate each hazard.

SAFETY RULES

At *Miss Maple's Nature House*, we allow children to engage in moderate risk activities. These mitigated risks are important developmentally. Guides assess all environments for potential hazards and remove them, if warranted. We balance the safety of the children with teaching them risk awareness skills. With due diligence, potential hazards do not interfere with the program or with children's enjoyment.

Our goal is to support children in developing their own powers of observation and discernment, and to reinforce their awareness of where their body is in relation to others. We wish to empower children to feel confident they can assess and navigate potential risks and be safe without an adult present, which will eventually occur at some point in their young lives.

MAINTAINING CURRENT INFORMATION

Staff reviews and edits the information contained here as we discover additional benefits, hazards, or useful resources. If you have a question, suggestion, or idea about other items to include, please feel free to contact Miss Maples' staff.

<https://www.6bcgarden.org>

<https://en.wikipedia.org>

<https://www.sierra.com/blog/kids/campfire-safety-with-kids>



BENEFITS of OUTDOOR PLAY and LEARNING

SOCIAL

- Cultural knowledge about self, community, and land (place-based aspects of learning)
- Friendships, teamwork and collaboration
- Perspective-taking/empathy
- Navigating conflict with others

EMOTIONAL

- Values of empathy, gratitude, kindness, and compassion
- Regulating emotions
- Stress reduction and depression
- Mental health
- Reflection and appreciation

COGNITION

- High order thinking skills
- Problem-solving and resourcefulness
- STEAM-based learning (science, technology, engineering, art, math)
- Creative and expressive arts
- Language and literacy development
- Fresh air/impact on cognition
- Vitamin D intake from sunshine

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Spatial
- Gross motor, locomotor
- Fine motor
- Hand-eye coordination
- Sensory integration
- Eye health
- Decreased symptoms of ADD and ADHD

ECOLOGICAL IDENTITY

- Stewardship and care-taking habits
- Connection with indigenous heritage/origins of land
- Personal connection with the natural world
- Caring and concern for nature
- Understanding and respect for diversity and interconnectedness of ecosystems

SELF-HELP SKILLS

- Learning to care for one's basic needs (eating, toileting, dressing for weather, etc.)

HAZARDS (General)

WILDLIFE

- Insects
 - Bees and wasps (hornets, yellow jackets, bumble bees, honeybees)
 - Ants (fire ants)
 - Horse and deer flies
 - Mosquitoes, black flies
- Snakes
- Arachnids
 - Spiders
 - Ticks
 - Fleas
- Mammals
 - Skunks
 - Racoons
 - Squirrels
 - Chipmunks
 - Opossum
 - Fox
 - Stray animals
- Birds (feathers, pellets, nests)
- Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species of ME

PLANTS

- Tree limbs, branches, and roots
- Poison ivy
- Nuts and seeds (allergens)
- Mushrooms
- Thorns and brambles
- Nightshade fruits
- Rare, Threatened, and Endangered plants of Maine

FIRE

WATER

- Stream and pond exploration
- Hyper- and hypothermia
- Dehydration

WEATHER

- Storms (thunder, lightning, rains)
- Snow and ice
- Hurricanes
- Wind advisories
- Falling branches
- Sunburn
- Heat exhaustion and heat stroke

TOOL USE

(knives, peelers, saws, hammers, pruners, etc.)

UNFAMILIAR PERSONS

- Stranger safety
- Volunteers and interns

ROADWAYS

- Parking area
- Crossing streets

ON THE TRAILS

- Getting lost
- Carrying or playing with sticks
- Tree climbing
- General injury with active play
- Foraging
- Collecting from nature
- Animal scat
- Litter



RISK BASED ASSESSMENT for MISS MAPLE'S NATURE HOUSE

Our thoughtful approach to risk management includes a Risk-Benefit Assessment (RBA) of activities and experiences we routinely engage in. Children are mentored about the pros and cons of each Risk Activity and given first-hand instruction about each poison fauna. The Staff does daily site scans as on-going monitoring of conditions in our changing outdoor learning environment. The following is a snapshot of our RBA that highlights how we embrace and manage risk.

CLIMBING TREES	RISK: Injury from fall
<p>Children are only allowed to climb to twice their own height. We encourage children to climb on their own—without physical aid from an adult. The learning benefits of this activity increase exponentially when a child is permitted to experience frustration, learn slowly at their own pace, and assess their own capabilities by climbing to a place they can reach on their own. Additionally, children are not to play below where another child is climbing. We encourage parents and older children to look carefully and distinguish branches that are dead or may be more prone to breaking. They learn about the characteristics of trees, bark, leaves, and branding and creatures that inhabit trees through close observation (science inquiry) and gain a new physical vantage point and perspective of the landscape, too.</p>	
STICK PLAY	RISK: Injury from improper use or carrying
<p>Sticks are dangerous mostly from the standpoint that they may be sharp. Giving children alternative, safer ways in which to play with their favorite found objects encourages them to honor the rules of safety that have been established. Children are to walk (no running) with sticks and they must be pointed toward the ground. We give children specific areas and opportunities to throw sticks at designated targets, away from the group. Stick play encourages children to speak and socialize as they invent games and make-believe play. They present problem-solving and construction possibilities involving spatial skills. Children hone math ideas of sorting, counting, measuring, or grouping insets. Observation of branching patterns is a math concept that helps with tree ID. Sorting sticks by size is also important for fire-making. Visual discrimination is used to find a particular kind of stick. Sticks can be used a writing, painting, and drawing implements helpful with literacy development. They're excellent in cooperative passing games and can be used to make a beat for music and song.</p>	
TOOL USE (General)	RISK: Injury from improper unsupervised use.
<p>Children develop a sense of accomplishment and self-sufficiency as they learn to use various tools (ex: mallet, shovel, screwdriver, saw, potato peeler, etc.) Fine motor skills are furthered by careful use of tools. The challenge of using tools is rewarded through a sense of pride and confidence. They regulate their emotions and learn to slow down as they follow directions, slow down, and concentrate on proper tool use. Group building projects using tools instill collaboration and teamwork.</p>	
TRAIL HIKES	RISK: Walking on/exploring uneven ground can cause children to trip or fall.
<p>Gross motor development, balance, and motor planning is enhanced by walking and climbing on uneven terrain. Children develop physical endurance on trail walks and experience the features of our local landscape as they develop an appreciation for our natural community.</p>	







RISK BASED ASSESSMENT for MISS MAPLE'S NATURE HOUSE (cont.)



GENERAL OUTDOOR PLAY	RISK: Hiding or wandering from the group.
<p>One of the most important safeguards we have instituted is that children and adult caregivers must be able to see each other at all times. That is, each child must be able to see their guide, and guides must always be able to see each child. Even when hiding or wandering, we insist that each child MUST respond when they are called by name and to remain in a place where they can be seen.</p>	
CAMPFIRES	RISK: Injury from burn.
<p>Children discover ways people use fire for light and heat. They experience changing states of matter. They learn how fire can be used for cooking healthy food and drinks such as roasted pears and mint tea. They discriminate between kinds of branches when gathering firewood and help construct different kinds of fires used for different purposes. Children follow directions and exhibit caution around fires, regulating their bodies and emotions to participate in campfire activities. When learning to use campfire, children develop respect for the power of nature and the special camaraderie and unity as a member of our campfire circle. They learn to listen to and express ideas or stories around the fire and can use charcoal remains for drawing and painting. Fire is a crucial element that has advanced human existence; under the close supervision of adults, children experience this direct connection to the natural world.</p>	
FORAGING	RISK: Illness from incorrect plant identification
<p>Children at Miss Maple's Nature House learn to distinguish between fauna that could harm them and those that pose no threat. They hone their observation skills and identify plants by leaf flower, color, size, bark, scent, etc. (science inquiry), and develop understanding of conditions and needs of specific plants and where to find them. They'll learn to describe traits of plants and other animals that rely on them for food and shelter. Children become familiar with harmful plants and how to avoid them (ex: poison ivy) and come to understand our essential connection to plants as nourishing food and medicine.</p>	
ENCOUNTERS WITH ANIMALS (General)	RISK: Injury from pinches, bites, or stings
<p>Children grow empathy, love, and appreciation for all living things, and come to understand that every creature has a role to play in our natural community. Miss Maple's is home to a flock of very friendly hens and a rooster named "Bernie". Caring for and observing the chickens and their multi-functional purposes at the House is a regular part of our daily rhythm. Children also demonstrate fine motor skills as they hold or touch small invertebrates such as worms or beetles. They form knowledge about different life cycles of various animals from birth to death and to demonstrate care and compassion. They enjoy imitating the actions, sounds, and other behaviors of animals through imaginative play and learn to identify animals native to their community. Children reflect interactions with animals through storytelling, writing, drawing, dramatic play, games, song, and creative movement. These activities help us become more mindful of the needs of other living things and how we can act to protect them.</p>	



NOTABLE (POISONOUS) FAUNA on SITE –

Northern New England Poison Control Center at 1.800.222.1222.

BOTANICAL	ELEMENT of RISK	POTENTIAL INJURY	LOCATION
<p>Bittersweet</p> 	<p>Berry</p>	<p>Consumption. Colorful, orange fruits the size of a pea, develop on a vine mid-late summer are poisonous to humans when ingested but, are favorites of birds.</p>	<p>Woodland edges. The US Dept. of Ag has bittersweet listed as a national invasive species</p>
<p>Solomon's Seal</p> 	<p>Except for the root and tender young shoots, all parts of the adult plant, especially the berries are poisonous.</p>	<p>White berries should not be consumed. The berries may cause vomiting, and the leaves, nausea, if chewed.</p>	<p>Northside of parking area, along edge of tree stump.</p>
<p>Poison Ivy</p> 	<p>All parts of plant, all times of the season.</p>	<p>Poison ivy rash is a type of allergic contact dermatitis caused by an oily resin called urushiol. It's found in the leaves, stems and roots of poison ivy ...</p>	<p>Back NW corner of lawn, and N corner of camp road/#35</p>
<p>Foxglove</p> 	<p>The entire plant is toxic, including the roots and seeds.</p>	<p>Foxglove has medicinal uses for cardiac ailments but, can also be toxic to humans and other animals. Early symptoms of ingestion include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, wild hallucinations, delirium and severe headache.)</p>	<p>Yellow foxglove in Perennial Garden</p>
<p>Lily of the Valley</p> 	<p>All parts of the plant are potentially poisonous, including the red berries.</p>	<p>If ingested, the plant can cause abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, and irregular heartbeat. Roughly 38 different cardiac glycosides occur in the plant, which are highly toxic if consumed by humans or domestic animals</p>	<p>Large swath @ woodland area behind Vinyl Garage to #35.</p>
<p>Rhubarb</p> 	<p>While the stalks are perfectly safe and very nutritious, its leaves contain oxalic acid.</p>	<p>Rhubarb leaves contain poisonous substances, including oxalic acid, a nephrotoxin. The long-term consumption of oxalic acid leads to kidney stone formation in humans. You'd have to eat a lot of rhubarb leaf in order for it to cause death.</p>	<p>One clump @ back NW corner of the lawn.</p>

<p>Virginia Creeper. aka Woodbine</p> 	<p>All parts have the toxic substances. The sap can cause skin irritation and blisters in sensitive people. Berry is poisonous for dogs and people.</p>	<p>Good source of food for birds. Fast growing, vine can reach up to 65' high. Very fast grower. Some people are barely affected while others can be very ill.</p>	
<p>Tansy</p> 		<p>Brushing up on it can give you a rash.</p>	<p>Perennial garden</p>

Northern New England Poison Control Center at 1.800.222.1222.