

Nature Niche

Nature By The Yard – Fostering a Natural Sense of Wonder

Fall, 2004

Volume 1, Issue 3

Calendar of Events

Please call the hosting organization for reservation information.

Tiny Tot Walk. 18-36 months. Buttinger Nature Center, Pennington. Thursday, Sept. 23 10am 737-7592

Nature Inside Out "Squirrels" Cotsen Children's Library, Princeton. Wed. Sept. 29 3:30pm and Thurs. Sept. 30 at 11am. Kids 4-6. 258-2697

Nature Inside Out. "Signs of the Season-Fall" Cotsen Children's Library, Princeton. Wed. Oct. 20, 3:30 and Thurs. Oct. 21, 11am Kids ages 3-6 258-2697

Tiny Tot Walk Kids 18-36 months. Wed. Oct. 27. 10-11am Buttinger Nature Center, Pennington 737-7592

Nature Inside Out "Preparing for Winter" Cotsen Children's Library. Wed. Nov.17, 3:30pm. And Thurs.

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Colors of Autumn

Here in the Mid-Atlantic, fall foliage is a strikingly beautiful bonus we are offered each year. The gold, red, orange and purple the leaves turn are a fantastic show of the color palate. But why and how does it happen?

Saying we love the colors the leaves turn in the autumn implies the colors actually change from green to something else. This is really only half

right. The leaves don't actually change colors. In fact, the beautiful yellow, purple, gold, orange and burgundy colors are always in the leaf. They are merely hidden behind the green.

In the fall, the days get shorter and cooler. This triggers the tree to thicken around the base of the leaf where it attaches to the branch. This layer, acts like

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Composting Your Leaves

Most of us dread the seemingly endless chore of raking the leaves to the curb, only to fight the wind, which insists on blowing them back onto the lawn. An alternative is to bag the leaves, but paper leaf bags can be expensive, especially if you have a few large trees in your yard. And plastic garbage bags? Well that just doesn't make sense. Why put something as degradable as leaves in an environment, where they can't break down and only serve to fill our dwindling landfill space? So what to do? Compost. If you've ever thought about

composting, this is the time of year to start.

Composting is the natural process by which organic materials break down into rich, humus.

To compost, all you need are four things and a place to let it happen: Brown stuff, green stuff, air and water. Dried leaves, sticks (smaller than 12"), straw, shredded paper, and pine needles are all brown stuff. Grass clippings, non-meat and non-dairy kitchen scraps, and manure are all green stuff.

The place to let it happen

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Nature By The Yard

(calendar continued)

Nov. 18, 11am Kids ages 3-6. 258-2697.

Tiny Tot Walk 18-36 months. Wed. Dec. 15 10-11am. Buttinger Nature Center, Pennington 737-7592

New This Fall:

Is your child's school interested in having Nature By The Yard visit the school grounds and offer a teacher training? I will come to the school and custom design a program that will show teachers how to use the schoolyard as an extension of the classroom. All programs are curriculum based, hands-on and easily adapted to meet the New Jersey or Pennsylvania's Standards of Learning. Give me a call or e-mail me to learn more about this unique opportunity.

(609) 610-6292
pam@naturebytheyard.com

We're on the Web

See us at:
www.naturebytheyard.com

Fall Colors (continued)

a rubber band, cutting off the circulation to the leaf. When water can't reach the leaf, the chlorophyll or green part of the leaf dies. This allows the yellow, gold and orange pigments to show through. The red color famous of the maples is from another pigment called Anthocyanin. This pigment isn't present in the leaf all year. The sunny days and cool nights that trigger the thickening of the

leaf stem (or petiole), also stop sugar made in the leaf from getting out. This sugar, called glucose, turns into anthocyanin and is what makes some leaves turn red.

Enjoy the show while it lasts because before you know it, it will be time to rake them all up.

Composting (continued)

should be out of the way, but accessible, and not in the direct sun. It can be a bin, pile, tumbler, box or anything in between.

Layer equal parts by weight of green and brown stuff. Between each few layers, add some soil, compost or compost starter. Water thoroughly and continue layering. Don't be alarmed when the pile gets hot. That's good and speeds up the process. Temperatures should rise between 140-160 degrees

F. Turn over the compost with a pitchfork every few weeks to feed it air and don't forget to throw in the veggies from your salad along with some fruit peels, cores and skins.

A few tips: Don't put meats, dairy, oils or fats in the compost. They smell and attract pests. Water the compost if it dries out. Don't forget to turn it.

For more information visit the master gardeners of Mercer County at www.mgofmc.org

About Our Organization...

Nature By The Yard was started in January, 2001. We offer fun, hands-on, nature education programs to schools, scouts, camps, libraries, birthday parties, garden clubs, nature centers, wildflower preserves or any organized group. We also provided in-

service trainings for teachers on using the outdoors as a classroom as well as offer advice and expertise on designing school yard habitats. For details on our services visit www.naturebytheyard.com