

Earthways

A review by Carrie Dentler

www.theparentingpassageway.com

Earthways: Simple Environmental Activities for Young Children by Carol Petrash is a much-loved book by a Waldorf teacher (and her husband, Jack Petrash, as many of you know, is a Waldorf Class Teacher) and is an easily accessible place to start to learn about how to construct a nature table, how to look at arts and crafts from a natural materials standpoint, how to work seasonally within your homeschool.

My copy was published in 1992, and has about 202 pages. It opens with an introduction regarding the environmental problems that are facing us today, but places this within the context of the developmental age of the young child:

“They come into life with a sense that the world is good and beautiful. Our interactions with them and the ways in which we bring them into contact with nature can either enhance these intuitions or destroy them. When children are met with love and respect, they will have love and respect to give. Our task as the parents and educators of young children is not to make them frightfully aware of environmental dangers, but rather to provide them with opportunities to experience what Rachel Carson called “the sense of wonder.” Out of this wonder can grow a feeling of kinship with the Earth.

She has a whole section of how to use this wonderful book, and how the book works in many projects from whole to parts (a foundation of Waldorf Education!)

Fall includes such things setting up an Earth-Friendly home and classroom, creating a Seasonal Garden (some of us may call this a Nature Table or Nature Space that changes with the seasons), and then a myriad of arts and crafts using natural materials – leaves and paint, pinecone people, baking activities, using pumpkins and Indian corn for baking and crafts. Winter focuses on the indoor play space, what your Seasonal Garden might look like for Winter, some finger knitting, woodworking and other indoor projects and things that would be appropriate for Saint Valentine’s Day. Spring focuses on the use of natural products to clean your home and classroom, the Seasonal Garden, experiences with the element of wind, working with wool from whole to parts, starting a garden. Finally, Summer focuses on creating an outdoor play space, the Summer Seasonal Garden, harvesting and eating berries, and more arts and crafts projects designed to capture the feeling of Summer.

There is a complete listing of mail-order supply companies, an extensive bibliography for teachers, and a list of picture books for small children arranged by season.

This book can sometimes be found on the shelves of local libraries, but I do think this is one you may want to have on your shelves. You will return to it time and time again!

