



Nature Play Playgroups in the City of Port Phillip

A guide for parents to start parent-led nature play playgroups

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic please refer to the Australian Government's [Department of Health](#) and Victorian Government's [Department of Health and Human Services \(DHHS\)](#) websites for the most up-to-date sources of information on COVID-19 before participating in nature play playgroups. [Playgroup Victoria](#) provide regular updates to playgroup members regarding COVID restrictions, and these must be followed to ensure the safety of our community. To check for beach, parks and playground closures in Port Phillip please visit the [City of Port Phillip COVID-19 webpage](#).

What is a nature play playgroup?

A group of families that meet regularly in a natural environment (e.g. a quiet corner of a local park, a small neighbourhood creek, or the beach) and connect to nature and their children through play. Meeting regularly gives children the opportunity to play outside often, in all weather conditions, and to build on prior play.

How do I start or join a group?

To be part of our first registered nature play playgroups in Port Phillip:

- Email your name, suburb and ages for all your children that will be attending to fycommunitysupport@portphillip.vic.gov.au by Friday 5th June 2020. Please indicate if you are happy to be a group rep who will liaise with Council and Playgroup Victoria.
- We will allocate you to a group and share your email address with the group rep. Please allow two weeks.
- Each playgroup must register with Playgroup Victoria (\$50 per group for 12 months). Playgroup Victoria can then promote and provide support to your playgroup. Families can decide whether they would like to become Family Members and receive comprehensive accident and injury insurance and other membership benefits. Please visit the [Playgroup Victoria website](#) for membership information.
- Once your groups are registered, Naomi Jeffree from Playgroup Victoria can provide group guidance. Naomi can be contacted at njeffree@playgroup.org.au.

Finding a space

To scope suitable parks, community gardens and open spaces in Port Phillip, visit the [Parks, Playgrounds and Trees webpage](#). For local beaches and a map of the foreshore visit the [Beaches webpage](#). Some suggested locations:

- Alma Park
- St Kilda Botanic Gardens
- Catani Gardens
- Elwood foreshore
- Westgate Park
- Albert Park lake

Respecting the space

A key part of nature play is learning to respect and care for nature, while exploring, playing and learning. It is important to discuss this and reinforce the message frequently with children. We ask that you:

1. Leave the space as you found it by leaving plants, shells, logs and rocks behind; redistributing any stick/rock piles, stick cubbies etc; take all food scraps and rubbish with you.
2. Respect the plants and animals by not pulling out plants or ripping off leaves; avoid trampling on small plants, and refrain from feeding or scaring any animals.
3. Report any concerns regarding litter, dumped rubbish, tree maintenance etc via [Online Services](#), the [Snap Send Solve app](#) or by calling ASSIST on 03 9209 6777.

Port Phillip is home to many major events, festivals, weddings, sport and commercial recreation activities. As these organised groups will have applied for and paid for permits, these events take precedence and we ask you avoid the spaces they are using. Please check the [Outdoor Events and Activities calendar](#) on the City of Port Phillip website to plan around these activities.

If your group keeps to under 20 members (including children) you do not need a permit.

Resources

- Playgroup Victoria Nature Play Booklet (attached)
- Victorian National Parks Association: [Nature at Home](#) page for activities ideas and resources to help you connect with nature from home, and [Wild Families Nature at Home activity sheets](#).
- Michael Hann (Paediatric Dietician) - Nature as Good Medicine for research and stories relating to outdoor play.

- Mark Wilson (Author) - great storyteller about Australian animals, landscapes and human impacts.
- Educating the Heart Through Nature Art by Marghanita Hughes
- Nature Play Australia: <https://www.natureplay.org.au/>
- Maggie Dent (Author/Educator): <https://www.maggiedent.com/>
- Sharron's Naturalist Kit: Magnifying cups or magnifying glass, white cloth, pad and coloured pencils.



Example of a magnifying cup

Acknowledgements

Thank you to presenters Ian Hunter and Sharron Hunter for sharing their resources and expertise, and for the Port Phillip EcoCentre for hosting this session. For more information on Ian Hunter's work, please visit

- The Developing Childhood Website: tracks the first three years of development and provides activities appropriate for developmental age:
<https://www.developingchildhood.com.au/>
- The Brain Therapy Website: for neuro-developmental therapy programs:
<http://www.braintherapy.com.au/index.html>

This session was supported by City Of Port Phillip Environmental Sustainability and Family Youth and Children Departments, with funding from the [Seedlings Program](#).

