

# *Sticky Sweet*

*Waldorf Curriculum  
Preschool Newsletter*

*August 31, 2005*

# ACTIVITIES

As you well know, spending time with children is always rewarding. It can help you to see the world around you in a whole new way and to value things that you may take for granted or consider perfectly ordinary. On the other hand, when you are entirely responsible for their care, even small children can be intimidating. Just what do you do with them all day? This newsletter is here to help – whether you're a parent, grandparent, babysitter, caregiver, neighbor, or anyone acting as a substitute teacher and spending the day with a preschool-aged child.

The following sections will give some suggested activities for this week's theme as well as methodology and ideas for preparation.

## **Opening Verse**

The Waldorf method places a strong emphasis on establishing rhythms throughout the day which give a comfortable sense of order and security to a child's life. One of these is to start your day (or your time together) with a short meditation called an opening verse. Choose a place which is clean and orderly; children are deeply sensitive to their environments and are unable to feel calm in the midst of chaos. Lighting a candle while you say the verse is customary, as this helps to establish a reflective atmosphere. Even if you choose not to do light a candle, the opening verse will be a transition for the child into your care. After you declare yourselves to be "ready now for work and learning", you can blow out the candle and begin your day!

Opening Verse:  
In the morning at the sunrise  
When the light of day doth break,  
Children's souls, by angels guided,  
Sleep from rested body shake,  
Ready now for work and learning,  
Happy, steady, and awake.

## **Poem**

Read your child the "Song of the Lavender Fairy" to introduce today's topic. This can be found in Flower Fairies of the Garden or online at <http://www.insects.org/ced4/barker.html>.

## Nature Walk

If you are fortunate enough to have a neighbor with lavender bushes, as we do, or have them in your own yard, walk with the child to see the lavender. Your child will certainly observe how busily butterflies and bees swarm around the sweet blossoms. Bend over some sprigs and breathe in the scent. Cut some of the lavender (with permission, if it's not your own plant) and bring it inside for your Nature table.

You can also visit a lavender farm to see and enjoy lavender plants up close. For help locating a lavender farm near you: <http://whatscookingamerica.net/Lavender.htm>.

## Nature Table

Also on the Nature table, place a jar of lavender honey. One source for this is [http://www.splendidpalate.com/product\\_p/lavhonc.htm](http://www.splendidpalate.com/product_p/lavhonc.htm); although I believe we got ours from Williams Sonoma I couldn't find it on their website. Let the child smell and taste the honey – DON'T give honey to children under 2 years of age because of the risk of botulism poisoning – and talk about how the honey is made from bees who visit only lavender flowers. Notice how the scent of lavender remains and can be tasted quite distinctly.

### *Why do bees make honey?*

Honey is a food stored in the hive to nourish the bees through the long winter months. If the early signs of autumn have begun to show in your area, you can talk with the child about how the colder weather is starting to arrive.

Cicely Mary Barker's Lavender Fairy illustration is available as a suncatcher which would be nice to hang above your Nature Table. They are on clearance right now at The Silver Penny: <http://thesilverpenny.com/StainedGlass.html>.

If you are unfamiliar with the idea of a Nature table, or need some inspiration to get back into it after a summer vacation from school, refer to [The Nature Corner](#). This book is an especially nice resource for this topic as one of the Summer examples given in this book gives directions for creating a beehive and swarm of flying bees around a bouquet of flowers (pp.47-49).

As a final idea, we added a piece of needlework which featured honeybees, a hive, and clusters of flowers to our Nature table – this was a cross-stitch design called Lake Julia's Bees which can be found in the April 2005 issue of Just Cross Stitch (back issues of this magazine are available from the publisher as well as through eBay). This would be a nice piece of summer handwork for an older child and makes a lovely contribution to the Nature table. When I made ours, I left the black glass beads and black glass hive entrance off of the design (except for the four beads in the corners of the design's frame) so that the predominant color of the design would be gold instead of black.

## Story

Read the first chapter of [The Complete Tales of Winnie the Pooh](#) with the child.

Please note that watching a Winnie the Pooh movie is **NOT** a substitute for this activity!

This story is very suitable for an older preschool child who can listen and imagine the actions taking place in the story and is not as reliant on the illustrations. You can, and should, continue to read the remaining chapters of this book over the next few weeks.

## Handwork

The Waldorf view of Handwork is different from the usual craft projects done with young children. Handwork must have an authentic context – it must be truly useful and must be completed slowly, deliberately, and with pride. As children grow, they benefit from the lessons learned in doing handwork – that taking your time, following all the steps, and doing your best work will result in a product of which you can be proud.

There are an astonishing number of projects which can be done using lavender – this herb has been in documented use for over 2,500 years! The Greeks and the Romans bathed in lavender-scented water and it was from the Latin word “lavo” meaning “to wash” that we have taken its name. Queen Victoria promoted lavender, making it popular across England, as she used it extensively in her room from washing floors and furniture, to freshening the air and having it strewn among the linens. Lavender is still found most often in laundry products.

Use the following poem to reintroduce the use of lavender in freshening clothes before you proceed to the handwork projects below:

### **The Lavender Bush**

By Elizabeth Fleming

At her doorway Mrs. Mayle  
Grows a bush of lavender,  
Large, and round, and silver-pale,  
Where the blooms, a misty blur,  
Lift the purple spikes on high,  
Loved of butterflies and moths,  
And on these, to bleach and dry,  
Mrs. Mayle spreads little cloths.  
Tray cloths, mats of cobweb-weave,  
All of them too fairy-fine  
For a careful soul to leave  
Dangling on a washing-line,  
Mrs. Mayle lays softly there  
Till she brings them in once more,

Sweet with the blossom-scented air,  
From the bush beside the door.

The harvesting of lavender flowers:

<http://www.palavenderfestival.com/lavender/intro/page2.html>

For directions to make lavender ironing water, lavender laundry detergent, and lavender laundry softener: [http://www.snowdriftfarm.com/form\\_home.html](http://www.snowdriftfarm.com/form_home.html).

Another popular use for lavender is in a pouch or sachet to hang in closets and lay in chests of drawers: <http://www.comfycountrycreations.com/lavender.htm>.

Of course, if you have lavender bushes nearby, you can always drape your handkerchiefs and other delicate wash items over them, as described in the poem!

### **Field Trip**

Try to find a nature center in your area which has a live bee colony display. Farms, museums, and county fairs are also possible sources for a bee exhibit. In Southern Maryland, we visited Battle Creek Cypress Swamp (<http://calvert-county.com/cypress.htm>).

To find bee colony sites in the UK, try <http://www.bees4kids.org.uk/> and choose Places to Visit.

### **Finger Play**

Use the "Bees-Waxing" finger play found on page 29 of [A Child's Seasonal Treasury](#) to introduce modeling beeswax to your child.

### **Art**

The beeswax will take a few minutes of warming in the hands to become pliable. The usual way to proceed with this is to have the child choose the desired color (for preschoolers, it's best to use only one color per child) and gently warm the beeswax while listening to a story. I have found from my own experience that it's best to tell a story orally during this time since if you put your beeswax down to hold the pages of a book, the child will put his bees wax down as well in unconscious imitation of you. If you'd like to tell a nature story about bees, visit [www.honey.com/kids/facts.html](http://www.honey.com/kids/facts.html) for some good parent background information.

Many beautiful creations can be modeled using beeswax. For vendors, try Nova Natural ([www.novanatural.com](http://www.novanatural.com)) for Artemis plant-dyed beeswax. Stockmar is the another brand traditionally used in Waldorf schools.

### **Closing Verse**

Use this verse to end your time together on a high note, striving to go forth and made the rest of the day a good one. Like the opening verse, lighting a candle is customary and provides a sense of closure. When the candle is blown out, you will go forward feeling positive about the next thing to come your way.

The golden sun so great and bright  
Warms the world with all its might.  
It makes the dark earth green and fair,  
Attends each thing with ceaseless care.  
It shines on blossom, stone, and tree,  
On bird and beast, on you and me.  
So may each deed throughout the day,  
May everything we do and say  
Be bright and strong and true,  
Oh, golden sun, like you!

# OTHER IDEAS

## **Cooking**

No specific cooking activities are suggested because many children and families have restricted diets such as vegan or vegetarian, gluten-free, kosher, etc. However, cooking is always a wonderful activity for a child to participate in. Bearing in mind any food allergies, and common-sense kitchen safety, consider preparing a simple recipe with the child. Children love to wash vegetables, measure and mix ingredients, and set the table for a meal. Preparing and eating a snack is always popular!

Cooking with lavender: <http://whatscookingamerica.net/Lavender.htm>

## **Play**

Don't forget the many benefits of unguided imaginative play. You need to stay nearby for safety's sake, if the child is in an unfamiliar environment or you aren't certain what should or should not be childproofed. All children need daily time to play. In the preschool years, play is the WORK of the young child. Prepare an appropriate play space and then stay out of it as much as you can; give the child the simplest and highest quality toys you can find such as large pieces of cloth, blocks, dolls, and materials from nature (such as pinecones, feathers, or shells). Avoid plastic toys. Consider a basin of water and some measuring cups or add some dish detergent and give the child a whisk. The more open-ended a material, the more of the child will be brought forth in playing with it. The more structured a material, the less will be required of the child – and the less he will grow and develop when playing with it. As a simple test, try playing with the toys yourself. If you find you tire of a thing quickly, so will a child!

## **Helping**

Helping around the home is an essential part of any Waldorf curriculum. It is not necessary to put a child in front of the television while you do the dishes or sort the laundry into lights and darks; let the child help you. Even if you have an automatic dishwasher, a child can help by rinsing the dishes before they are loaded. Children love to do work that they know is truly helpful and all young children thrive in situations where they are allowed to imitate an adult. Washing the dog, washing the car, sweeping or dusting, repotting houseplants, feeding the cats, setting and clearing the table... all of these are wonderful activities to do with a preschool-aged child.

# PLANNER

**Activities:** highlight the activities you would like to do

Opening Verse

Poem – “Song of the Lavender Fairy”

Nature Walk

Nature Table

- lavender honey
- Lavender Fairy suncatcher
- The Nature Corner, pp.47-49
- “Lake Julia’s Bees”, Just Cross Stitch magazine April 2005 issue

Story – The Complete Tales of Winnie the Pooh, chapter 1

Handwork

- “The Lavender Bush”
- harvesting lavender flowers
- lavender ironing water, laundry detergent, laundry softener
- lavender pouch or sachet

Field Trip

Finger Play – A Child’s Seasonal Treasury

Art

Cooking

- cooking with lavender

Play

Helping

Closing Verse

# PLANNER

**Book List:**

list the books you will be reading  
feel free to substitute other books you may have on hand  
which relate to this theme

**Materials:**

list all materials required for your chosen activities

# BACKGROUND

For more information on the Waldorf method, try these resources:

reading: What is Waldorf Education?

<http://www.fortnet.org/rsws/waldorf/faq.html>

reading: Why Handwork?

<http://www.weirdolls.com/misc/homeschool.html>

reading: The Importance of Child's Play

<http://www.portlandwaldorfschool.org/lower%20school/our%20community/kinder%20garten.html>

reading: Creating the Play Space

<http://www.threesisterstoys.com/parenting/playspace.htm>

Please feel free to contact me at any time at [waldorf\\_curric@yahoo.com](mailto:waldorf_curric@yahoo.com).