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# Clay Play

Learning through Living - Wonders of the Natural World - Natural Clay Play

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Marghanita Hughes





# Clay

## Natural Clay

Nature Art in it's purest form

It was an extremely hot day so I went down to the creek next to our camp to cool down and play for a while. To my delight I found natural clay and began playing with the organic matter...I was beyond excited about playing with Natural Clay in it's natural environment.

When you ***play in nature***; observing, exploring what ***interests you*** - you discover things - Magical Things!!! -

Like Natural Clay!

I didn't set out to create anything - just to play but I found myself inspired by the stunningly beautiful and enchanting surroundings, inviting me to explore and create a little pot, it was by far the most magical time ever playing with the natural clay. The pot was wobbly and squint in appearance which I loved. ***It's our imperfections that make us beautiful.***

Nature invites us to play, explore,  
discover, imagine, create!

# Play

# Explore

# Discover



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# Imagine Create

My little daisy pot I made is special - for it holds magical memories of my time at the creek, a time of freedom and pure joy, of communion with the natural world. It is a little piece of me and my story, the cedar, the daisy embedded in my little rugged pinch pot, not perfect by any means. It tells of the joy and delight of creative play, the freedom to explore and express myself in my *own unique way*.

We are all beautiful, highly creative beings - who need time to express our feelings and emotions and when we do, it brings harmony and balance back into our lives and right now I believe *we all need this playful, creative time, more than ever before*.

Watch the video:

[Natural Clay Play](#)

[Listen to the Notes on Clay Play](#)

# Discover the magic and wonder of this beautiful, playful sensory experience

Now that you have watched the video, how can you and your students experience clay play in your classroom, outdoor space or at home?

Listen to my short recording -

[Listen to the Notes on Clay Play](#)





## Messy Play

Many children never get to be really messy - clay is messy, that's part of the fun!

Whats really important is that the children (adults) get to play, get messy, explore and discover for themselves the joy of creative expression...the freedom to play with the clay without direction or judgement.

Playing with the clay, free to discover, imagine and create whatever the child wishes to express is what this clay play is all about. When the children are older and have had many wonderful playful experiences with clay, you can invite them to make something simple like a pinch pot or clay deer; owl...whatever. The children will be happy to follow simple directions that still allow them freedom to create the pot or clay owl the way they see and feel, not how others think the owl or pot should look like. The younger children in your group (we work with mixed age groups - 4- 7 yrs) will be happy to play alongside the older students exploring the natural materials provided.

In our online Nature Art Program, we provide examples of Nature Art not to copy but to provide inspiration, possibilities - invitations for students and teachers to explore, experiment and discover their own creative intelligence.

# Freedom of Expression

- Set up a space where the children can make a **mess**.
- **Provide small amounts of natural clay, water jugs and buckets** - The sight and sound of flowing water is intrinsically soothing and meditative.
- Allow the children to **hunt and gather their own natural items** from nature that they may wish to experiment with alongside the clay, such as flowers, sticks, shells etc...**their choice!**

## NO RULES

- Allowing to **express themselves freely - without judgement**. Simply allow the children to **play, explore, discover, create** with the natural materials.

## Experiment Explore Discover

My early childhood was wild and free, playing outdoors, every day in our back garden or roaming the wildwoods and neighborhoods. Both my parents were art teachers so there was always art materials and art books around to explore and experiment with, helping to stimulate and support our curiosity and creativity.

### No Rules - No Judgement

My parents never judged and still don't to this day. Paints, clay, chalk, oil pastels, and craft materials were always available and accessible. We had the freedom to express ourselves creatively every day. My brothers and I were allowed to be messy - really messy! There were no rules, other than we had to tidy art materials away when finished and wash the paint brushes etc.

We can all benefit from taking time away from our electronic screens. It's not just children who are suffering from Nature Deficit Disorder, adults suffer physically and emotionally from their disconnection from the natural world too. During these times of isolation and uncertainty we need to return to what nourishes our heart and soul. Combining nature and art provide a double dose of very powerful natural medicine for all ages. Nature Art can help reduce anxiety, and depression, bringing harmony and balance back into our lives.

# Curiosity & Wonder

I am still that young child full of curiosity and wonder. **What is clay?** What is it made of, where can you find it ?

You can explore all these wonderful questions with your older students and learn together.



Down at the Creek  
immersed in the flowing water,  
playing with the clay,  
surrounded by the cedar I  
felt **one with all creation.**

It felt natural to paint my  
body with the clay, I know  
children and adults would  
love to do this too.

Watching the clay designs  
dry on your body is super  
cool and what a thrill it was  
to allow the force of the  
pounding water to wash it  
all away. How quenching and  
invigorating!





# Gratitude

Truly grateful for this beautiful creative exploration and thrilled to be able to share a tiny glimpse of the magical wonders of the Natural World. Inviting us all to Play, Explore, Imagine, Create...wishing you all a beautiful and creative September - how exciting to witness the changes that will take place during Autumn - a most magical season - enjoy!



Above, a little pinch pot made by one of my students left for the fairies, with a few berries inside

# Love and Respect

When we are out in nature we must remember to be respectful. We always give thanks for what we are gifted from our Mother Earth. We first ask for permission to remove the fallen branch, a flower, a shell....then we give thanks for the sacred gift and we only take what we need.

Through creative nature play children begin to fall in love with the birds and insects, dandelions, the trees and the bumblebees. By giving thanks for all the gifts along the way, the children learn to be respectful for all life and to appreciate how sacred all life is.

## Pinch Pots with Kindergartens



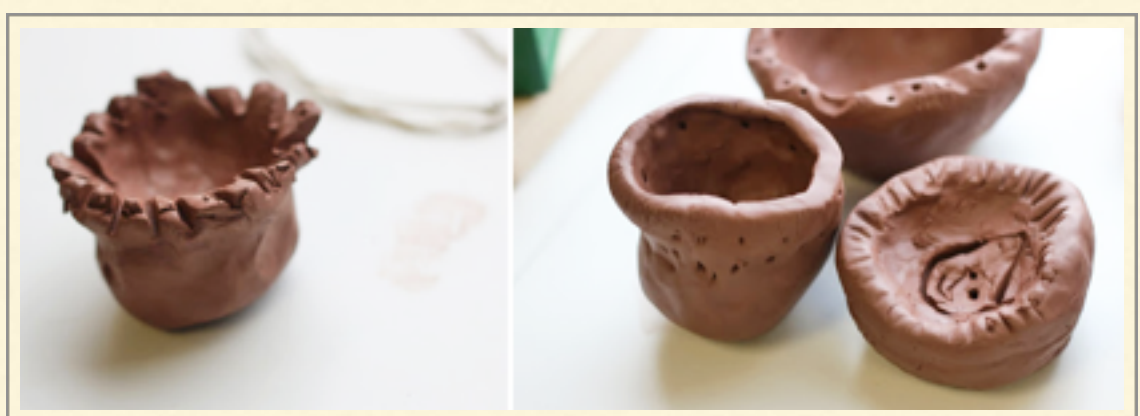
We had oodles of fun making these simple clay pinch pots with a class of 24 kindergartens and 28 grade one's. The students played with the clay, exploring how they could change it's shape simply by rolling and squishing, patting and poking. Each student had access to a rolling pin, pencils, blunt knives and the natural materials they had collected on our nature walk such as leaves, petals, sticks and tiny stones. This playful time allows children to get to know the clay, how it feels, how it can be manipulated using both their hands and tools. How it reacts when you add water or leave it to dry. By allowing the students the freedom to explore and experiment with different instruments and textures, of their choice and at their own pace, the student feels more comfortable and confident in trying to make a pot or sculpture with a little instruction.



After they had finished exploring and experimenting with the clay the students were invited to make a small pinch pot.

A pencil is a wonderful tool to create simple lines and dots, a tool they are familiar with.

2. Press your thumb into the centre of the ball and push your thumb down about half way. If you go too far your thumb will pop out the other side.
3. Keeping your thumb in the middle of the pot and your fingers on the side of the pot, move your hand slowly around the pot, this will create an edge.
4. If your clay pot gets to dry you can add a little water with your fingers.
5. While the clay is still moist invite the students to decorate their pots. You can show examples if you like. The best way to present a clay pot is to make one along with the children so they can see how you move your thumb and hands around the pot, how you smooth out cracks and bumps with a little water. This is a far more powerful way than just talking through the instructions. In our nature art program we present to the teachers and parents with hands on workshops.



## Unique Design

Each pot is as beautiful and unique as the highly creative child that shaped and designed it. Remember, the child must have the freedom to design and decorate their own pot.

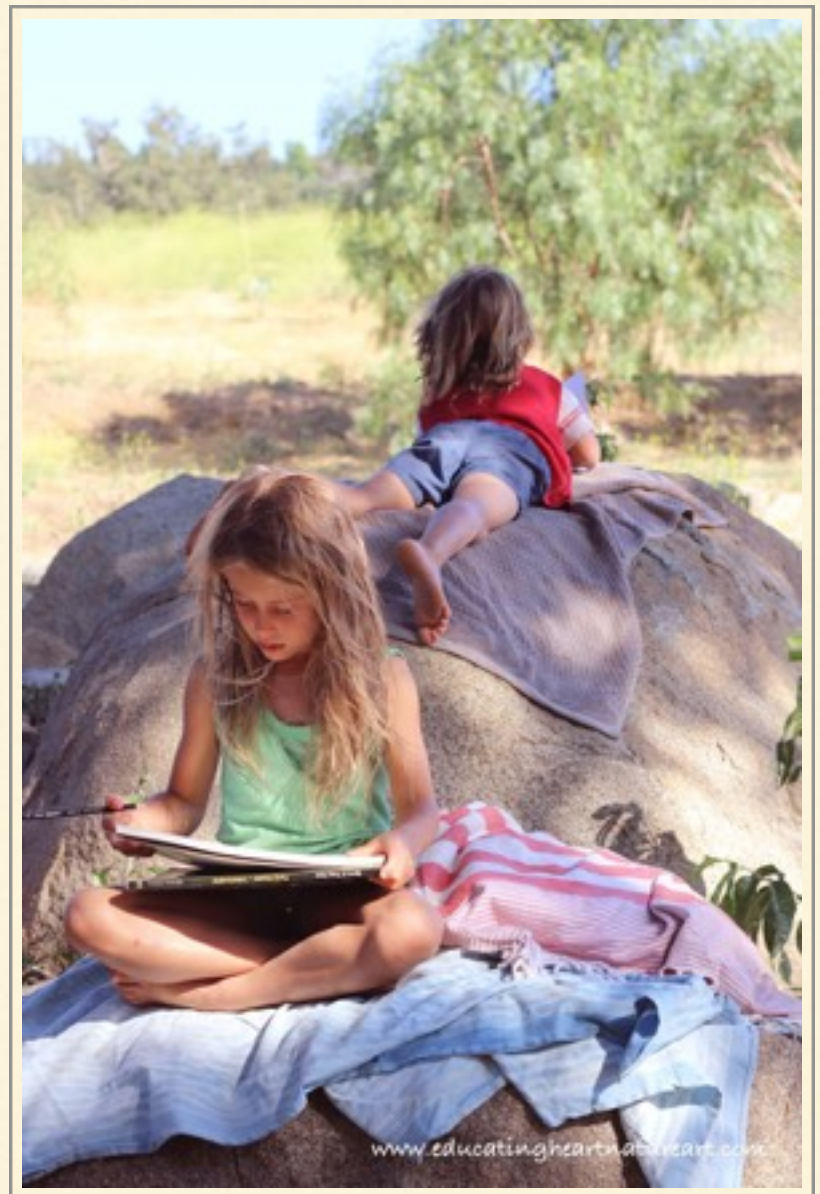
# More Nature Art

Join us at Educating the Heart with Nature Art

**What we experience as a child establishes deep rooted connections that influence our development and what we might become**

I cannot finish without sharing one of my favourite quotes by the beautiful artist Paul Klee. He found nature a constant source of inspiration for his art. As a child he would spend hours in the garden drawing.

***“Lead you students towards nature, into nature; let them learn by experience how a bud is formed; how a tree grows; how a butterfly opens its wings, so that they will become as rich as variable; as precious as nature herself.”***



We know that when children play outdoors, they are happier, healthier and more creative, so too are adults. We can all benefit from making time for playful, creative exploration with nature, indoors and outdoors. If we cannot get to the forest then we must bring the forest to you.

We provide Nature Art Classes, Courses and Programs for all ages.

[www.marghanita.com](http://www.marghanita.com)

# Play Explore Imagine Create



Thank you for sharing the wonders of the Natural World with your children,  
bless you all. **Let's go play!**

With love and gratitude Marghanita

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## SAFETY

Creeks and Rivers can be very dangerous. Please take care when visiting these locations. Never take children to fast running water. Always supervise children when playing with water.

