Nature Object Parades

A sorting and pattern activity

Ages: 2 – 4
Time: 20 minutes

Gathering and sorting nature objects can help us compare sizes and types. Gather materials you find lying on the ground in the Woodland Garden or Childrens' Discovery Forest.

Here's How:

1. **Gather many nature objects**, including cones, stones, leaves, and sticks.
2. **Look for and discuss the source of the objects**.
   - For example, which leaves and cones came from which trees?
   - Why are the leaves and cones on the ground?
3. **Sort the nature objects into different piles**, keeping like things together: leaves in one pile, stones in another, etc.
4. One pile at a time, **make a nature object parade** by placing the objects in a line arranging them from small to large.
5. Now **mix all objects together into one pile and make a parade** by placing all of them in a line arranging them from small to large.
6. Mix all the nature objects together again and **make patterns with the objects**. For example: cone, leaf, cone, leaf, cone, leaf.
   - An adult could begin a pattern and have the child guess what object should be next. For example, stone, cone, stone, cone, stone, _____.

The Back Story:
Discussing the sources of nature objects like leaves and cones and why they are on the ground helps explain seasonal cycles in nature.

Gathering nature objects involves precise use of hands and fingers, which helps develop motor skills. Handling nature objects like cones, leaves, and sticks and experiencing their textures aids sensory development.

Sorting and matching nature objects uses hand-eye coordination and helps develop motor skills. Sorting and matching activities help develop visual perceptual skills, thinking, memory skills, and problem-solving. Children learn to identify similarities and differences and develop their cognitive ability to classify things based on their attributes.

When children see and make patterns it encourages mathematical thinking, including counting, problem-solving, and drawing inferences about number combinations. Pattern-making is a pre-algebraic activity.