



A Guide to Outdoor Gear

Quality learning happens best when children are comfortable and for this to happen, quality gear is essential! The following suggestions for outdoor gear have been compiled from local nature-based programs as well as our own personal experience. Please remember to label all items with your child's name. These brands are not required – you may have options that work best for your family already! Additionally, we encourage you to look second hand at: garage sales, second hand online retailers, outdoor brand websites that offer already loved gear, and online sales!

Seasonal Clothing Needs

Fall

- Rain Boots w/ Sturdy Socks (not ankle socks)
- Jacket or Sweatshirt
- Rain Pants and Rain Jacket w/ Hood (for cool windy days as well as rainy days)
- Extra Top Layer (to keep in the classroom, aka sweatshirt, long sleeve shirt, etc.)

Winter

- Scarf or Neck Warmers
- Hat
- Waterproof Mittens **and** Gloves
- Insulated Boots
- Wool or Fleece Socks
- Snow Pants and Winter Coat or One-piece Snow Suit
- Extra Top Layer (to keep in the classroom, aka sweatshirt, long sleeve shirt, etc.)

Spring

- Rain Boots w/ Sturdy Socks (not ankle socks)
- Rain Jacket w/ Hood
- Rain Pants
- Waterproof Mittens
- Extra Top Layer (to keep in the classroom, aka sweatshirt, long sleeve shirt, etc.)

Brand Recommendations

*Rain Mittens - Reima, Polarn O. Pryet

*Rain Pants / Suits - Reima, Polarn O. Pryet, Tuffo

Rain Boots - Totes

*Waterproof Winter Mittens / Gloves - Polarn O. Pryet, Reima

Winter Boots - Bogs

*The brand Polarn O. Pryet has graciously provided a 15% discount for our nature school families to use if they choose to purchase gear from them. To access the discount link please email

preschool@bookwormgardens.org

Retailers:

- Reima
- *Polarn O. Pryet
- L.L.Bean
- Columbia
- Eddie Bauer
- Bogs
- Totes
- Patagonia
- The North Face

Rain Gear

Rain pants, rain boots, raincoats, and WATERPROOF rain mittens are a part of our daily uniform and are not just for rainy days! Lots of people may not be familiar with rain mittens. Rain mittens are not lined with any kind of insulation and are not made to be worn alone in cold weather. Rain mittens help keep children comfortable while playing in cold water and mud and also helps protect long-sleeved clothes and jackets from getting wet and muddy. It can also be an excellent tool for kiddos who may not like the sensory aspect of getting “messy”. They can still participate in the “messy” learning without actually getting their hands messy! You can find waterproof rain mittens to purchase from various places online, but we have had experience and can recommend the “Reima” brand for both rain mittens and rain pants.



Although rain boots may be waterproof on the outside, if boots are lined and they get soaked over the top of the boot, they take a long time to dry. We suggest the brand “Totes” for rain boots because they do not have any lining so they dry very quickly and have the ability to be wiped out if they need to be dried quickly. So far we’ve found the Totes rain boots to be cheapest via Target, but you can find them on the Totes website and amazon as well. Please make sure your child wears socks with any rainboot to prevent blistering.



Waterproof Gear

Waterproof outdoor gear for ANY season keeps children warm, dry, and comfortable during outdoor activities involving water, sand, and mud.

- They provide protection while sitting on wet, damp and cool ground
- They provide protection from wind and rain
- They provide added protection from insect bites
- They can reduce scrapes and scratches from branches and plants

Waterproof rain gear is typically worn during temperatures between 45 - 70 degrees. As the weather warms up and cools down past this range adjustments will be made.

Warm Weather

Warm weather is generally easier to navigate at Nature Preschool. However, we are pleased to share the following tips for late summer and late spring weather:

- If temperatures are over 70 degrees, we generally remove our rain gear unless it is actually raining. Otherwise, it's easy to overheat.
- Sunhats, a full water bottle, and closed-toe shoes or rain boots are good warm weather accessories. (Open-toed sandals can result in wood chips inside shoes as well as small abrasions on feet.) Please have your child wear socks inside rain boots so they don't develop blisters. We hike through a lot of muddy puddles, so shoes that can get wet are important. (You may want a dry pair for your child, post-hike!)
- Warm weather can also mean ticks. Long, light-weight pants tucked into socks can help prevent ticks from crawling up.

Cold Weather Gear

When the **temperature drops into the 40's** it's time to switch to insulated waterproof boots and add an extra layer under your waterproof rain gear.

Please be aware that there is a BIG difference between "water resistant" and "waterproof" gear.

With the amount of outside play the children will be engaged in, water resistant mittens/gloves will result in wet, cold hands. **Please do your best to acquire WATERPROOF winter mittens for your child.** We prefer that your child has mittens over gloves for a few reasons. First, mittens are typically easier for a child to put on independently, which is something we want to foster. Second, if your child is wearing mittens, they will be able to layer a pair of lightweight gloves under the mittens if they are experiencing cold hands. Another option is to layer insulated winter mittens with uninsulated waterproof rain mittens. This can provide the best of both worlds and keep your child's hands nice and toasty. We encourage you to use what you already have at home and consider the combinations below to provide your child with



Insulated winter mittens

OR



Insulated winter gloves

+



Uninsulated waterproof mittens



Insulated, waterproof winter mittens



Thin, wool gloves

Waterproof snow pants and/or a one piece snowsuit is the best option for snow play. If you cannot find a waterproof snow option, you can get a thin, waterproof suit to layer over a water resistant snow suit. Keep in mind that you would need to get a bigger than normal size in order to layer over a snow suit.

Have a plan for how you will dry your outdoor gear before the next class period. Please do not send your child with damp gear. Anything that can go in the dryer should be put in the dryer before sending them to school with your child if they are wet. You could consider purchasing a second pair of boots and mittens as a backup or invest in a boot / mitten dryer.

For boots, we've had lots of people recommend the insulated Bogs. They slip on like a rain boot so are easy for a child to get on independently, are waterproof and can be insulated for negative degree weather. We recommend buying winter boots to fit a bit big so that they can be paired with thick socks. Insulated boots should be brought out for use when temperatures drop into the 40s. For winter accessories we recommend hats that cover the ears fully, and neck warmers / balaclavas instead of scarfs, which can easily get lost.

Tips for Keeping Feet Warm (in rain, snow, mud, and slush!)

- Have your child wear their thickest socks when trying on winter boots. You want to be sure there is enough room in the toe box. Without adequate space for circulation, toes will get cold quickly. We generally find sizing up ½ or even a whole size in winter boots provides the added space needed in the toe box.
- A single pair of thick wool socks inside a roomy toe box is warmer than multiple layers of socks that can hinder circulation!
- Avoid cotton socks in cold weather. Cotton pulls heat away from feet, especially when it gets wet. Wool or wool-blend socks are best.
- Consider the tried-and-true method of wrapping socked feet inside plastic bags before putting them into boots. While we don't love plastic grocery bags, they really can help keep small feet dry in wet, sloppy weather.
- **Please have your child practice putting on and taking off any new gear at home before sending them to school in it.**