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Ngā rawa māori | Natural resources

Natural resources are gifts from Papatūānuku (Mother Earth). Hands-on experiences in nature and with natural materials offer tamariki opportunities to develop ideas about how things work in the living, physical, material, and spiritual worlds. Te ao Māori perspectives such as the tikanga associated with using natural resources, can guide these experiences and foster the valued role we all have as kaitiaki — guardians of the natural world.

Links to *Te Whāriki*

Playing with natural resources and experiencing nature particularly supports the **Exploration | Mana aotūroa** strand, where children learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning. Children also develop working theories for making sense of the natural, social, physical, spiritual and material worlds. Experiencing the natural world can develop a sense of respect and responsibility for natural resources and the important qualities of the environment that are of significance to their family and wider community (**Contribution | Mana tangata**).



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Natural resources help tamariki to:

- › develop an appreciation and understanding of the natural world (animals, birds, insects, and plants)
- › develop a sense of curiosity
- › use scientific methods such as observation and classification
- › understand the importance of kaitiakitanga.

Adults can support tamariki by:

- › encouraging discussion about natural resources
- › fostering curiosity
- › sharing knowledge
- › modelling respect and care for the natural world
- › bringing in new items for display.

Setting up the area

Natural resources can be used in different areas of creative play, such as collage and clay, or used for hands-on exploration as items tamariki can touch, smell, or pick up. Display these where tamariki can reach them, such as in baskets, on low tables or shelves. It is important to make sure the items are safe to hold, non-poisonous, and larger than 5 cm.

The Poison Centre (poisons.co.nz, 0800 764 766) and Landcare Research (landcareresearch.co.nz/publications/poisonous-plants/) provide useful resources and information about poisons and poisoning.

Ideas for natural resources

- › a selection of natural materials, such as shells, bark, sponges, stones, non-poisonous seeds, leaves, flowers, plants, branches, logs, driftwood, seaweed, moss, lichen, rocks, sticks, pine cones, seedlings, bones, fur, feathers and flax
- › posters, books, and information about the natural world.

Note: Always check that the items are safe to taste beforehand and make sure that items are larger than 5 cm especially when infants and toddlers are present. Be aware of any nut allergies.

