

The Children's Garden Guidebook 2022-2023



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Welcome

Welcome to the 2022-23 school year! I am delighted you have chosen The Children's Garden as a place for your child to experience play and the natural world as a foundation for their learning and development.

The Children's Garden opened its doors in the fall of 2004 to offer an early childhood setting that protects, honors and nurtures the magic of a young child's unfolding development. In our little garden we offer imaginative play, movement, song and verse, exploration of the natural world, healthy food and warm loving attention to tend your little 'seedlings' as they begin to bud and blossom into the larger garden of community and the world.

This Handbook is written as a "Garden Guide" with the intention of creating clarity and connection between home and school by shedding light on the underlying principles of Waldorf early childhood education, which are behind the day-to-day rhythms and work in the Garden.

May we find joy, wonder and friendship as we work together. May we all grow and blossom as individuals and as a community over the course of the coming seasons.

Warmth and Welcome,
Ms. Vickie

COVID-19 Special Section

Please see additional addendum.

Communication

Clear and open Parent-Teacher communication and relationship are key to creating the vessel, intentions, expectations and community that will best support your child's educational experience. The Children's Garden provides the following forms for fostering good relationship and communication:

- Weekly TCG email updates
- Parent Teacher Conferences in October and by request in February
- Quarterly Parent Evenings
- Home Visits (by invitation from parents)
- Email/phone conversations throughout the year (when requested by Ms. Vickie or parents)

Daily exchange of information about absences, illness, accident, disposition, change in pick up, etc. can be done by email, text or a quiet moment at the beginning or end of the day.

Parents are encouraged to attend parent meetings, work with the teachers as concerns or issues arise, and communicate any challenging situations in the child's life. Please speak with me if you have any school or classroom related problems or concerns.

Phone Contact During the School Morning

During the morning my attention and focus is with the children. I do not generally answer the phone during school hours. I do try to have my cell phone near me on the playground in case of emergencies but I do not answer it unless I recognize a parent's phone number. If you need to communicate with me during school hours concerning a change in schedule or new

arrangement for pick up, please text or call my cell phone and leave a message. I will check for parent messages after snack (10:45), before lunch (12:15) and after lunch (12:45).

Attendance

We miss and wonder about our friends when they are not present. Please report absences to me by text, email or telephone early in the day. It is very helpful to know the reason (i.e. sickness, travel etc.) and the probable length of a child's absence.

Arrival and Departure

Children thrive on rhythm and routine and our morning greeting begins this rhythm. It is ideal to arrive with plenty of time to settle in. Please arrange to have your child arrive between 8:45am and 9:00am. I ask that parents make sure their child has proper attire for the weather. Parents or the one bringing the child to school will initial at the sign-in shelf by the gate. Once there is acknowledgment, children may come through the gate with their lunch, water bottle and any extra bag. It is very important for your child and the teachers to meet this way in the morning. A simple routine helps the child know what to expect and sets them up for the morning. I will be available at the gate for greeting between 8:45 and 9:00am.

At the end of the day we will close our morning with a goodbye verse and song at 12:45. Children will then say goodbye and will be called to meet their parents or caregiver as parents/caregiver arrive.

If pick up plans change over the course of the morning and someone other than the parent or an authorized adult will be picking up your child, please leave me a text message, email or phone message.

CHILDREN SHOULD NOT EXIT ANY GATE WITHOUT AN ADULT PRESENT. PLEASE MONITOR YOUR CHILDREN CLOSELY IN THE DRIVEWAY!

Late parents will be charged a fee of \$5.00 for every fifteen-minute period or portion thereof, beginning at 1:00pm.

Dress and Items to Bring from Home

What we do most of the day is PLAY. Please consider the following when choosing your child's clothing:

- Easy to move in (run, climb, crawl) and to loosen for the bathroom
- Not too dressy (able to withstand dirt, grass, mud, water, paint)
- Layers for warmth and changeable weather
- *No advertisements or media characters*, preferably solid colors and soft prints.
- All clothing LABELED with your child's name including underwear and socks.
- Shoes that are good for running and playing. Please consider closed toe shoes.

Children need both hands for playing so I ask that children with long hair please have their hair out of their eyes. We will have extra clips and hair bands to assist us in 'seeing their sparkling eyes' if they are in need of one during the morning.

Each child will have a net bag in the bathroom to hold an extra change of clothes, diapers, wipes, etc. Parents are welcome to check the bag or switch out weather appropriate clothing throughout the year. Please include seasonally appropriate clothing with underwear and socks. LABEL ALL CLOTHING PLEASE. Dirty or wet items from the day will be placed in plastic bags to go home.

Children will also have a labeled hook by the nursery door to hang their backpacks, jackets, etc. Heavier items should be hung on the double metal hooks above the wooden hook.

PLEASE BRING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS TO BE KEPT AT SCHOOL :

- **EXTRA CLOTHES** – A change of clothes. Please include underwear, socks, top, bottom and layer for warmth if needed. These will be stored in a net bag upstairs.

- **INDOOR SHOES** - A pair of indoor slippers or slipper socks with non-slip bottoms (for cooler weather).
- **RAIN GEAR** - Rain boots, rain pants, and rain jacket to allow your child full freedom to move and play in the wet weather and help prevent wet muddy clothes and frequent changing.
- **WARMTH** - Cold weather boot socks for cooler weather.

Please have all of the above items labeled with your child's name.

Warmth

Physical warmth helps a child feel secure, comfortable and more likely to move, explore and engage with their surroundings and peers.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of dressing your children warmly. In the early childhood years, the physical body and brain are still building and forming. If a child is not dressed warmly they must use their energies to keep their body warm rather than strengthen, protect and grow their bodies. Our play yard is also shaded and in a valley making it possible to feel several degrees cooler than the surrounding area. Our North Carolina seasonal weather can vary 30 degrees from beginning of school until the close of the day. Layers are the best way to meet this changeability. In the colder months of the year it is best if children wear a complete under layer on top and bottom. I recommend a set of wool or silk long johns or camisoles and undershirts for a warmth layer on the top and long johns or pajama leggings under pants or dresses. A well fitting hat that covers the ears is a must in cooler weather as well.

Toys

Please do not bring toys from home. Home toys can get lost or broken and lead to social difficulties that bring disharmony into our morning. They are also an extra burden on the teachers. Exceptions are "security" items, something a child has made, found on a nature walk, or a special item to be shared and then put away for safekeeping.

Rhythm

We are born out of and into the rhythms of the universe. We begin our journey with the rhythm of our mother's heartbeat resonating and permeating every multiplying and specifying cell of our bodies as we grow in the womb. Our first breath as an earthly being is the drawing in our surrounding environment, and the beginning of a breathing rhythm that will carry us through all our days on the planet. We are born into the daily rhythm of the rising and setting sun, the seasons of the year and movement of the planets and stars overhead.

These rhythms are not mechanistic schedules or unconscious routines but life giving rhythms, strength giving rhythms, rhythms that bring a sense of security and promise.

Waldorf early childhood education recognizes and works with these soul-satisfying rhythms to nurture the young child. At The Children's Garden we will make an effort to tune into these daily, weekly, seasonal and breathing in and out rhythms. Our daily activities will offer a breathing in and breathing out rhythm as we work and play, move and rest, speak and listen, eat and digest, sound and be silent.

Our weekly rhythm will include a specific snack and activity for each day of the week.

Our seasonal rhythm will include stories, songs, activities and movement circles related to the natural world as it breathes in and breathes out. Our festivals will be a community celebration of the seasonal rhythms.

Daily Rhythm

In the fall we will start each day outdoors. When the needs of the group or weather changes warrant an indoor start the rhythm may be shifted.

8:45 - 9:00	Arrival time, greeting and receiving children.
9:00 - 10:00	Outside play time - woodland walks, swings, sandbox play, wildlife care, gardening, seasonal activities.
10:00 - 10:15	Transition indoors, bathroom, hand washing.
10:15 - 10:30	Circle time, finger plays, songs, and movement.
10:30 - 11:15	Verse of gratitude, snack time, and dish washing.
11:15 - 12:00	Indoor creative and imaginative play with daily activity (bread making, drawing, crafting, painting, etc.). Optionally, more outdoor play - weather and season dependent.
12:00 - 12:15	Story time or puppet show.
12:15 - 12:45	Verse of gratitude, lunch, clear away and gather to go home.
12:45	Closing verse, parents greet children.

Weekly Rhythm and Activities

A weekly rhythm is established through the practical and artistic activities of each day. Bread baking, gardening, woodland walks, cooking, watercolor painting, feeding and caring for the wildlife, beeswax modeling and other handwork activities are offered throughout the week. Special seasonal events or projects may occasionally be planned instead.

Monday	Cloth folding
Tuesday	Drawing
Wednesday	Bread making, grain grinding, butter churning
Thursday	Painting

Weekly Snack Rhythm

For snacks I will provide organic and/or whole foods when possible. For special holidays/festivals, there will be special low/no sugar treats.

Monday	Organic brown rice, coconut oil, raisins, sunflower seeds
Tuesday	Organic Corn Chips, black bean dip and tomatoes
Wednesday	Homemade Bread, sunbutter with apples or oranges
Thursday	Steel cut Oats with maple syrup, coconut oil, raisins, pumpkin seeds

Remember, it is important for young children to have 11-12 hours of sleep each night and to eat a healthy, protein rich breakfast before coming to school. Snack is served around 10:30 each morning. If your child has had an early breakfast and may need something to eat before 10:30 please give them a little nibble right before drop off. When needed I will have a “squirrel snack” of seeds and raisins for children who display signs of needing something before 10:30.

Lunches

Children should bring a simple healthy lunch placed in a basket or lunchbox free of commercial or media characters. Children should have a water bottle with their name on it. We will refill water bottles when necessary and children will have access to them throughout the day. PLEASE LABEL YOUR CHILD'S WATER BOTTLE. Reusable containers are encouraged. No desserts, sugary foods or candy please.

Please alert me to any dietary restrictions or allergies your child may have.

Seasonal Festivals

Festivals celebrating the rhythms of the natural world and our relationship to it are an important part of a child's life. Festivals that we traditionally observe:

Michaelmas/Apple Festival (Autumn Equinox)	Autumn Fairy Walk (Halloween)
Lantern Walk	Autumn Harvest (Thanksgiving)
Winter Spiral (Winter Solstice)	Candlemas (candle dipping)
Valentines Day	Spring Fest (Spring Equinox)
May Day	Year End/Graduation

The School Calendar will have the dates for these events.

If your family has a cultural or religious celebration you would like to share with the children please contact me and we will schedule a sharing time.

A note about photography at events: Our festivals and events are offered to create community and personal moments that are precious, connected and meaningful. Please be sensitive to these moments when taking photographs

so that the moments are not spoiled by bringing attention to the photography process rather than the experience of one another and the festival.

Birthdays

At The Children's Garden we celebrate your child's special day by baking a cake at school and making a birthday Wish Book for the birthday child.

We invite the parents, siblings and other family to join us after lunch for a celebration at 12:15. We gather to hear a Birthday Story and then move to the table to eat cake (made by the teachers) and fruit (brought by the parents). I ask the parents to share a few photos and stories from their child's first years. The child will also receive a handmade gift from Ms. Marie.

As your child's birthday draws near we will schedule a time that we can celebrate at school.

A word about out of school birthday celebrations: If all children are not invited to the birthday gathering, it is best to not send invitations at the school.

Health

Our children's health is important to us all, and equally important is taking the proper time to recuperate after an illness. To send a child back to school too quickly either with a compromised immune system or possibly still contagious is of no benefit to anyone. Therefore, if your child has had a fever and/or highly contagious illness, please wait 24-48 hours before returning to school. This extra day of rest is vital for the well being of our children both physically and emotionally.

If your child develops symptoms of illness during the day, I will isolate him or her from the class and contact you immediately.

Please keep your child at home if she or he:

- has a fever, or has had one during the previous 24 hours
- has heavy nasal discharge
- has a constant cough
- displays symptoms associated with communicable disease
- reddened eyes, sore throat, headache, abdominal pain, and fever
- or a highly contagious illness such as stomach virus, flu, chicken pox, strep throat, etc.

If your child develops a communicable disease, please notify me at once. I will alert the other families in the class.

Sleep can be an underestimated need and major contributor prior to an illness. I only bring this up to serve as a reminder that sleep has an impact on a child's health.

Immunizations

Our community’s health is important to us all. The Children’s Garden follows the immunization requirements of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (https://immunize.nc.gov/schools/ccf_requirements.htm).

A reproduction of the NCDHHS immunization requirements is provided here:

By This Age:	Children Need These Shots:						
3 months		1 Hep B					
5 months		2 Hep B			2 Polio		
7 months	3 DTaP	2 Hep B	2-3 Hib		2 Polio	3 PCV	
12 months	3 DTaP	2 Hep B	2-3 Hib		2 Polio	3 PCV	
16 months	3 DTaP	2 Hep B	3-4 Hib	1 MMR	2 Polio	4 PCV	
19 months	4 DTaP	3 Hep B	3-4 Hib	1 MMR	3 Polio	4 PCV	1 Var
4 years or older (in child care only)	4 DTaP	3 Hep B	3-4 Hib	1 MMR	3 Polio	4 PCV	1 Var
4 years and older (and in kindergarten)	5 DTaP	3 Hep B	3-4 Hib	2 MMR	4 Polio	4 PCV	2 Var

Please note your child’s immunization progress on the “Medical / Emergency Contact Form”. Please notify The Children’s Garden if your child’s immunization status changes through the year.

Special COVID-19 note: All children attending TCG during the 2022-23 are expected to receive the Covid vaccine. This helps ensure a continuous and full year experience for the whole Children’s Garden community.

Injuries at School

In the event of a scraped knee, bruise, splinter or scratch, I will attend to the wound with clean soapy water, ice or a Band-Aid. I will not administer any medication without prior written consent from the parents.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, I will contact the parents (and those persons listed on the medical emergency form if necessary). If needed, the child will be taken to the hospital of choice.

Creative Discipline

Love and Warmth are the elements that we want to provide to surround and inform the young child as he/she develops and meets the joys and challenges of being in the larger community of friends, teachers and other parents. Children in their first 7 years are also in the age of imitation where they “mimic everything in their environment uncritically-not only the sounds of speech, the gestures of people, but also the attributes and values of parents (teachers) and peers.” With these realities in mind The Children’s Garden teachers will strive to offer discipline that is imbued with love and warmth and that will model a firm and loving response to disruptive behavior and challenging situations.

The careful attention to our environment and the strong rhythm of the day also helps carry the children through many issues that develop at this age.

When conflicts between the children occur, each child will be given the freedom to express his/her needs with the teacher near and listening. If guidance is needed in the conflict, the teacher will model positive conflict-resolution skills or use creativity to redirect the situation.

Parents will be notified, and their child will be sent home, if they display unusual and repeated aggressive behavior or intense emotional upset such as biting, kicking or tantrums. If your child is having difficulties with aggressive behaviors, please confer with me so that we can establish consistent methods of discipline at home and at school. If your child reports any aggressive or offending behavior from other children please notify me so attention can be brought to the situation at school.

Parent Evenings

Parent Evenings are an opportunity for us to gather and share our concerns, desires, and gathered wisdom in a community circle. This year four evenings are scheduled, one per season, each with a different topic. Time may be set aside to work on a seasonal gift for your child or a class project. This is a fun night and parents are encouraged to attend!

Library

A library, no matter how small, is an asset to our community. Our school library has an assortment of books. A portion of the supply fee goes towards enhancing our library each year. Please let Ms. Vickie know if you'd like to explore the library or borrow any resources.

You may also contribute to the expansion of the library by donating a book in your child's name for their birthday or other occasion. A personal inscription will be placed in the book.

Media

The Children's Garden is a media free environment by design. During these formative years, the young child needs human interaction, imaginative play and lots of physical movement for the healthiest development. There is substantial and compelling research demonstrating the negative impact of electronic media upon the development of the young child. It is not only the content of current programming that is often harmful but the actual physical and psychological processes involved in consuming media that put the child's development at risk as well. We will be discouraging conversation about media characters and programs during school. And I ask that clothing and lunch boxes do not contain media images. Media talk and play often impacts the children's play and conversation such that it limits the creative play impulses, flexibility and inclusion of others.

I ask that children do not watch any media before coming to school in the morning. We take great care in the selection of images, songs and stories that the children receive each day at The Children's Garden. It is best that they are not primed with electronic images and sounds before they greet their friends and play. In the same vein, it is best if a child ends the day and enters sleep with the warmth of human voice and song and comforting images.

Home Visits

Home visits can provide a wonderful bridge between home and school. A home visit can also deepen the teacher's understanding of who your child is and what their interests and passions are. Visits are generally scheduled in late August before school begins. Please contact Ms. Vickie to schedule a home visit and inquire about a date and time that suits your family. A home visit is usually 30 minutes.

Visitors

Parents are welcome to join our preschool morning anytime. I also welcome visits from special family members (especially grandparents, who have such wonderful stories to share about their childhood). Visitors are generally given a quiet task to perform while joining the morning activities. Out of town visitors are always welcome to come for a quick tour and hello at pick up time.

Questions

Parents are encouraged to call or email with any questions, concerns or simply to touch base. Please notify me if any event in your child's life may affect his/her day at school. I am available to speak with you most days after school (sometimes it can be hectic though), or by phone any evening after 7:00pm, or by arranged time.

Tuition Payments

Tuition payments may be made by check or bank draft. Please make checks and drafts out to “The Children’s Garden Preschool”. A tuition basket will be placed at the sign-in shelf. If you elect to pay in nine equal payments, each is due by the first day of each month, September through May). If you elect to pay in two payments, the first payment is due September 1 and the second is due February 1.

Covid-19 Addendum

We appreciate all the efforts you as a family make to ensure that our community is healthy. Covid-19 remains active in our community and therefore we will maintain some of the protocols created last year to care for each other.

We will greet children at the gate at 8:45am and dismiss at the gate at 12:45pm. There is a sign-in sheet for parents to initial at drop off indicating that they are monitoring the child and family for any symptoms.

The amount of indoor time will be limited. The windows will be open and the air purifier will be used. We will eat outside unless the weather dictates otherwise.

Please notify me when your child is fully vaccinated. Both Ms. Vickie and Ms. Lindsay are fully vaccinated.

Children and teachers will wear a mask while inside. This protocol may change once all the children are fully vaccinated.

Based on current guidelines and TCG vaccine policy, if your child has Covid-19, the day of positive test or symptoms start is Day 0. Children may not attend for at least five days. Children are able to return as early as Day 6 if symptom free. The same guidelines require children to wear a high quality mask, inside and outside, Days 6-10. Please consider this when determining what is best for your child and our community in regards to returning to school.