



Northey Street City Farm Earth Kids Volunteer Information

Thank you for your interest in volunteering on the Northey Street City Farm Earth Kids program!

About the Earth Kids Program

The overarching goal of the Earth Kids program is about supporting kids to become 'nature smart' – to have the knowledge, understandings and skills to engage in creating a more sustainable world – in a fun and interactive way. It is an experiential week of outdoor discovery in which kids learn about the animals and plants at the Farm through observation and supported questioning, explore Indigenous knowledge, experiment with Earth Arts and bushcraft skills, and put permaculture into practice.



Each Earth Kids program differs according to the seasons and to include a diversity of activities. Some of the activities will be:

Gardening – planting, harvesting, composting, bush tucker and learning about seasonal changes;

Bushcraft – building shelters, making string, making fires, knife skills;

Earth Arts – creativity using natural materials;

Indigenous understanding – storytelling and cultural sharing;

Earth connection – daily 'magic spots', mapping, wandering and other activities to support understanding of the web of life and the elements that all life is made of.

Children are expected to participate in the activities, though there is always an option for them to take time out in the quiet area to read, write, draw or lie down. Several afternoon sessions will have a few different activity options for the kids to choose from.

The Earth Kids program is informed by permaculture ethics, principles and practice, with the core ethics of 'people care', 'earth care' and 'fair share' being our foundations. Through the week we will be weaving ways that people can live more sustainably and care for the earth, so practices like composting and being mindful of water use will be integrated into the week.

The teaching approach that we use on is based in the premise that nature is our best teacher, and is inspired by the 'coyote mentoring' approach as documented by Jon Young, Ellen Haas and Evan McGowan in the book 'Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature'¹. See <http://coyotesguide.com/>. More information about coyote mentoring is in the last section of this document.

¹ Young, J., Haas, E., & McGowan, E. (2010). *Coyote's guide to connecting with nature, 2nd edition*. Shelton, Wash: OWLLink Media.

Volunteering

Volunteers may volunteer for 2 to 5 days of the program. Non-parent volunteers require a current blue card (working with children check). The hours are 8.15am to 3.45pm each day, and the Youth Education Coordinator (Emma) will confirm the days you will be volunteering.

Volunteers who are comfortable to do so may work with a small group for the 'magic spots' (see later section), for morning check-in activities or for explorations of the farm. Otherwise volunteering mostly involves supervising kids in an activity being taught by one of the staff members, or in the free play sessions.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time, please approach one of the staff members.

If you are going to be absent, please inform Emma by texting 0411 084 727 as soon as you can.

Our Earth Kids Team

Our Earth Kids team consists of a group of people who are experienced in working with children here at the farm and have undertaken training in nature awareness, permaculture and/or bushcraft. We will also have some special guests visit to offer experiences relating to Indigenous culture and Bushcraft. Staff members have experience in working with children visiting the farm for school excursions, and running activities like composting, worm farming, planting, propagation and Earth Arts with these groups.

Child Protection

NSCF regards its role in the protection of children in our care as of the utmost importance. NSCF has a range of policies and procedures to keep children and young people safe. Details of these policies are available on request along with how you can report child safety concerns.

All staff have been made aware of and trained in the NSCF Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy.

There will be at least 2 staff members with the children at all times regardless of the number of children attending. All staff and non-parent volunteers working with the children will have current blue cards (working with children check). At least one staff member present will hold a current approved first aid qualification, including emergency anaphylaxis and asthma management training. Only staff members are to administer first aid.

We will have a quiet tent for any kids who are feeling overwhelmed and / or needing time out to themselves.

Site safety issues

NSCF endeavours to create a safe, secure environment where children feel welcome and at ease.

Some important safety issues relating to the site include:

- * There is no fencing at farm, - there are a couple of quiet roads and a creek bounding the farm. Children cannot cross the road without a staff member or volunteer accompanying them.
- * There are European honeybee hives on site. If any child is known to be allergic to bee stings, we will let you know.
- * We allow kids who are confident climbing trees to do so. However we only allow them to climb trees that we have checked thoroughly as in the past we have found dangerous items in the trees.

About Coyote Mentoring

'Coyote mentoring' (or perhaps 'dingo mentoring as some have suggested we call it in Australia) involves people connecting to nature in a way in which growth and learning happen gradually and almost invisibly. It happens through experience, honing senses, and observing the natural world. It is an approach that Jon Young, author of the 'Coyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature' learnt from his mentor, Tom Brown, although he did not even know for years that Tom was using a teaching or mentoring approach with him, such is the nature of coyote mentoring. In the Coyote's Guide, Jon elaborates: "The approach draws people to the edge of their knowledge and experience and guides them into new territory. This repeats through a cyclical pattern of visits, explorations and relationship-building that allows for real connection to occur in its own organic way. In previous centuries, this connection happened naturally as families in a community depended on natural;

resources and the ingenuity to know when, where, and how to hunt, trap, fish and gather what they needed, while they cared of the natural world at the same time.” (Coyote’s Guide, p. xxvii).

Core routines of nature connection

Through the NSCF Earth Kids week, we will be introducing some of the core routines of nature connection as described in the Coyote’s Guide. “The Core Routines of nature connection are things people do to learn nature’s ways. They aren’t lessons. They aren’t knowledge. They are learning habits” (Coyote’s Guide 2nd ed p35). Some of these core routines include sit spots (or ‘magic spots’ as we call them), story of the day, bird language, expanding our senses, exploring field guides and mapping. Some of these core routines are learnt by playing games that make the core routines fun and easy to learn.

Magic spots

The magic spot (or ‘sit spot’) is the keystone nature connection core routine, and for this reason, we practice it most days of the NSCF Earth Kids program. On the first day of the program, the Earth Kids usually go with their “mini-mob” to an area where they will choose their magic spot. As described in the Coyote’s Guide, “The idea is simple: guide people to a special place in nature where they will be comfortable with just being there, still and quiet. In this place, the lessons of nature will seep in. Sit Spot will become personal because it feels private and intimate; the place where they feel wonder; the place where they get eye to eye with a diversity of life forms and weather patterns; the place where they face their fears – of bugs, of being alone, of the dark – and grow past them; and the place where they meet nature as their home.” (Coyote’s Guide, p37)

In the wild and at home, we would encourage kids (and adults!) to have magic spots away from other people. On the Earth Kids program, as it is important to supervise the children so that the children are fairly close together, but we suggest that the kids’ magic spots be a minimum of 5 metres away from each other, as when they are in their magic spots they shouldn’t be talking with other children. They may choose to make some noise at times, for example, to be imitating bird sounds that they are hearing, or they may write or draw if they wish.

Each day the children will go to their magic spot where they will sit and observe. This will be for about 10 minutes on the first day, going to 15 or 20 minutes by the end of the week. The end of each magic spot period will be marked by a ‘coo-wee’. After that each mob (of up to 10 kids) will gather in a central spot in their area where they will share some observations. Occasionally we may sub-divide the group if the volunteers feel comfortable to lead a small group of up to 5 in this. The idea is to draw out from kids what they have seen by asking questions. We can sometimes build a ‘story’ of what went on by piecing the kids observations together. Eg. If one child sees a duck in the creek you might first ask what it was doing... and if it moved away from the area. Then you could ask if any of the other children saw the duck... again what it was doing, where it was going etc...

On one of the days earlier in the week, after their magic spots, we will invite the kids to come up with questions they don’t know the answer to, but that they are curious about, and later in the week the group can return to these questions and see if they have discovered any answers through observation.

From experience, kids come to love their magic spots and towards the end of the week some of them are bound to be asking “when will be doing our magic spots today?”, with a feeling of excitement and anticipation. It is fostering this love and excitement to be in nature that Earth Kids is all about.

***Thank you for your interest in volunteering on the Earth Kids program.
We hope to share in Earth Care and Connection with you!***