



Summer SANCTUARIES

Build your own nature cubby!

Photos courtesy of Annette Witteman

Building a shelter with found materials is a fun way for kids to spend time outdoors while exercising their imaginations and problem-solving muscles. Using found materials like sticks, vines, and stones, your child can create a nature-inspired play space that can be decked out with "furniture" such as logs for stools and tables and can even be "landscaped" with a rambling stone path leading to it! Whether it's a cubby for one or a cave big enough for the whole family, hours of fun are sure to be had!

WHAT YOU NEED

- » Branches of various sizes
- » Vines (use invasive species such as English Ivy or Kudzu), or twine
- » Logs or large rocks
- » Small stones



WHAT TO DO

1. Head to a local outdoor space—a park, wilderness area or perhaps your backyard—where you have permission to play outdoors.
2. Gather materials and decide on the shape and size of the shelter: do you want to build a dome or a teepee-shaped shelter? Will the structure take advantage of trees or natural landforms, or will it stand alone?
3. Build your structure.
4. Move in and have fun!

MORE CHOICES

There are so many different ways to create a natural shelter, so if there isn't a woodland nearby don't despair! Bamboo plant stakes can be lashed together with twine to provide an internal structure on which to drape cloth or blankets. Pop-up tents and beach shelters also make a good base for layering on natural materials like branches and leaves. If you want to make a living shelter, try planting willow branches or growing pole beans or vines like honeysuckle at the base of the sticks!

Outdoor Etiquette Make sure to respect the environment! **Don't** cut down live trees or bushes. **Do** use windfall and found materials to construct your shelter instead. **Don't** let ticks, snakes, or poison ivy take the fun out of shelter building. **Do** your homework and be aware of potential risks for your area.

The Exploration Club for Families... NatureKids BC helps children get outdoors to play, imagine and explore in nearby nature. Join a family nature club near you or become a free-range member. Find out more at: www.naturekidsbc.ca. If you are already a member you can use this activity as part of your Action Awards Quest!

