

WILDFLOWERS NATURE SCHOOL

CAMP 2024 PARENT HANDBOOK

Location:
10570 Mill Station Road
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 54
Graton, CA 95444

For more info:

Bev Buswell, Owner/Director/Mentor

707-479-1052

Mark Buswell, aka Farmer Buzz, Owner/Farmer/Bookkeeper/Mentor

707-481-2710

info@wildflowerkids.org
www.wildflowerkids.org

PROGRAM

BASICS

WHAT?

One week of nature camp, playing, exploring, crafting, connecting to nature, self & each other. See program description.

WHEN?

July 8-12. M-F, 9-3.

WHERE?

In the forest, meadows, and gardens of Wildflowers Nature School! With the generous blessing of our neighbor, sometimes we'll wander into the wildland behind us. This land is the ancestral territory of the Pomo, who have lived in this area for thousands of years. We owe them a debt of gratitude, to say the least. We will acknowledge this with the children formally once, as well as incorporate this into some activities and emergent moments.

WHY?

Because our kids need more opportunities to play in nature. For Connection, between children and nature, children and us mentors, and between children. Because Buzz & Bev miss having kids in our lives. Because our land misses kids running, playing, making forts, following tracks, and hiding in it's woods.

WHO?

Ages 5-12 are CAMPERS, but this year we also have a special **JUNIOR MENTOR** program for **12 to 14 year olds**, teaching them how to be mentors to children and how to connect them to nature. See "Program Description" .

MENTORS: Bev brings the spark of wonder and following "mysteries". She'll teach some primitive skills like fire, crafts like cordage and more (see "Program Description" below). Bev will be directly mentoring the Junior Mentors and creating a deep program and ceremonies for them (see "Who" above). Farmer Buzz will teach several activity periods, leading gardening, nature walks and archery. Evan will teach scout craft / survival skills probably 2-3x. We'll have one more mentor, TBA. My fingers are crossed that Azalea will be back, with her years of experience here and such a strong connection to this land and to many of the kids here.

CAMP SIZE & RATIO

Our size is an expression of our belief in "mentoring". We aim for 14 kids, 3 Junior Mentors, and at least 2 Adult Mentors at all times. We'll split into groups sometimes, often by age, sometimes by interest, sometimes for Bev to teach the Junior Mentors, and sometimes for the Junior Mentors to practice their new leadership skills. Sometimes we'll invite the 9 or 10 and older group, our "senior campers", with the Junior Mentors.

VOLUNTEERS & SPECIAL GUESTS

THIS YEAR WE'LL HAVE A MUSHROOM SPECIALIST come and help the kids create their own little mushroom garden to bring home. We've had guests teach us drama activities, pottery, nature sketching, woodworking, archery, natural dyes, spinning, tracking, making paint from plants, & more. Other ideas: hobbies, skills, stories!!, foods, traditions, cultural information, music, or careers. Many of our activities just take a lot of helping hands and need no preparation from you. If you or someone you know (grandparent, aunt, friend, neighbor,...) has a special skill for an activity to do with the kids, we may be able to pay our "Special Guests" a stipend for their time. Grandparents are a great resource, bringing the elder in to the community, creating opportunities for multi-generational learning, and honoring the wisdom that comes with experience. We also really need help with prepping the land for camp (maybe a Community Work Day?) Call Bev to discuss the possibilities at 707-479-1052.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

CAMPERS AGES 5-12:

We will spend our days doing a variety of outdoor activities, catered to the children's ages & interests. We almost always do archery, cob, gardening, solar food drying, some primitive skills (debris shelter, cordage), camp skills, arts & crafts, nature art, exploring, tracking, bird language, forts/ shelters (debris or maybe of willow), creating habitats, team building (problem solving, creating, games, etc.), water & mud play, animal imitations, self-reflection such as personal challenges or journals or sit spots, & games that help with nature awareness. Some of the other *possible* activities may be: firemaking, lashing, building a terrarium, sourcing water, etc.), basketry, flower crafts, leather work, weaving, natural paints or dyes, whittling, orienteering (compass & "lostproofing" skills), woodworking, and a myriad of other possibilities. This is all balanced with the truly necessary nature play that kids invent.

JUNIOR MENTORS:

Our 12-14 year olds will practice leadership, assisting little ones in camp activities. I will have several mentor training sessions with them during the week, learning:

1. Coyote Mentoring (how to secretly teach without kids knowing they're being taught)
2. Leadership skills ("taking the lead", empowering children, mindfulness, and all the "what ifs")
3. Nature education (reviewing awareness, botany & biology, and how to teach them to children)
4. Primitive skills and how to lead activities using them (safety, how to assist without taking over, when to know if a child is too young for it)
5. "Edges" - the magic place where a child is challenged but not frustrated
6. Archery training (safety!, posture, how to help kids learn it, when to know if a child is not ready & what to do when they aren't).
7. How to lead several crafts
8. Safety (fire, knives, dangerous plants, black widows, ground wasps, etc.)

They will get a "certificate" of Junior Mentor Training at the end of the week in a little ceremony. Ceremonies are important at this amazing transitional age. Who knows, maybe the certificate will land them a job with a camp some summer. Someday if we need paid helpers at our camp, IF kids have attended at least one, preferably 2 Junior Mentor training weeks, once they're 14 they can be a volunteer (no camp fee), 15 they can earn a stipend, and 16 they could earn a real income if we're hiring.

WHAT TO BRING

FOOD & WATER:

Each day in a daypack, bring the following LABELED:

- QUART (or more) secure water bottle that doesn't drip on it's side, that the child can open and close themselves, labeled with a permanent marker
- substantial healthy snack
- substantial healthy lunch

(Kids OFTEN run out of food here. They're burning a lot of energy.)

Campers should bring their food in non-disposable containers that are re-usable and have no advertisements or licensed characters or intense graphics on them (baskets, boxes, cloth bags, zip-arounds, etc.). Try for zero waste lunches. All trash will be sent home in the lunchbox.

Items with sugar are not appropriate for sustained energy as they cause blood sugar to spike & dip (& socially, sugar becomes a distractive issue here).

On occasion, if it's part of the curriculum, we may serve food to the kids. There's a fair amount of grazing on foods growing here, wild and cultivated. We teach them which foods they can graze on here and what to be careful to avoid. If your child has food sensitivities, please note that on form. For severe sensitivities, please also speak live to Bev 707-479-1052.

CLOTHING:

We've had summer camp days in the 100's, in the low 50's, and some totally raining. Layering clothing is great.

EVERY DAY, bring

- spare set of clothes in case of water or mud play or messy art
- swim suit or spare quick dry shorts & tank top in case we run through sprinklers or sit in the creek
- foggy morning clothes: long sleeve and long pants under fleece for example
- sunny day clothes either under morning clothes or in daypack: shorts and short-sleeve shirt
- sunhat or cap !!
- SHOES: Bring or wear closed toe shoes. If they bring closed toe shoes in their daypack AND they can climb trees and run in their sandals, they can wear sandals on hot mornings, or bring them in pack to change into if they get hot. We allow bare feet, BUT in case we crawl through blackberry tunnels, they need closed shoes. If you do NOT want your child to go barefoot here, let us know.

On Fridays, we used to have kids bring sturdy jeans and long sleeve shirt in case our adventure brings us on a crawl through a blackberry tunnel. BUT, our big adventure in the "Coon Cave" is not possible without a clearing of a newish infestation of poison oak. ANY VOLUNTEERS to restore the Coon Cave?

RAIN GEAR

If weather's iffy, keep an eye on email & text. If they have to bring rain gear, I'll let everyone know. Be prepared! I suggest if you don't own one, to purchase a rain coat & rain pants in case we do get that rare June rain. One June it rained for 2 days at camp. If your child owns rain pants & coat, weather will not be one more barrier between him/her and nature!

Please label everything they bring to camp and **check the lost & found** at least on Friday!

SUN PROTECTION

A big hat is a big plus as long as they can see well out of it. (We do birdwatching, tree climbing, tunnel crawling, cob stomping, etc.). We will assume that if you want sunscreen on your child, you will do so before dropping him/her off. If you are concerned about sun exposure beyond hat & morning sunscreen, talk to us.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

ILLNESS

If a child has had any of the following symptoms in the last 24 hours before camp, please don't bring them here: fever, sore throat, unusual fatigue, vomiting, upset stomach, stomach ache, diarrhea, skin problems, body aches, sneezing, coughing, eye or nose drainage or any other symptom you think might indicate they are just coming down with something. For your children's & other's health, please be ok with he/she having a full day of wellness before returning. Many times, a child comes back without that extra day of rest and is so tired they end up in tears to go home. Other times, the illness takes its next turn. If you have any questions or your child just has allergies or congestion from an illness weeks ago, **talk to Bev**. If there have been contagious illnesses (flu, covid, etc.) recently in your household, **please inform us**.

COVID

It is really imperative that anyone on this property not bring Covid to all of us. Buzz and Bev are in their 60's & have pre-existing conditions that can make Covid dangerous. Many kids may be in close contact with grandparents or great-grandparents. Here's our 8 point Covid Policy:

1. **STAY AWARE** – Stay vigilant of both signs of illness and who you & your child are in contact with. You are not just analyzing your own risk, but the risk to ALL of us.
2. **ILLNESS** - ANY signs of illness will be cause for us to send the child home. (See "Illness" above).
3. **TEST** – If the child OR a household member or anyone they've been in close contact with are showing signs of illness, please urge them to test for covid. If it's not too traumatic, please test your child. Otherwise, at least a parent who was also exposed should test. If tests for child and an adult family member are negative and all symptoms are gone, probably yes bring them to camp. If it was close contact with someone positive, let's talk.
4. **QUARANTINE** – Rebounds are common. If someone living in the household tests positive for Covid, please keep your child home until after 3 days of both zero symptoms and negative testing by all household members. With photo of positive test in household, refunds will be 75% unless we can fill the spot, then 100%.
5. **MASKS** – If you are getting together in a small space with strangers or with someone you think may have a lot of exposure, please think of all of us in deciding whether to mask. If your child had an exposure to a contagious illness recently, we may ask for him/her to wear a mask. If you wish your child to wear one, of course that's great. Just let us know so we help enforce your wishes.
6. **OUTBREAKS** – If we have an outbreak of covid with multiple people getting it in a short period of time, we may close for a few days. Refunds will be 75% in such a case.
7. **GET FULLY VACCINATED** – Vaccination protects other people, too. If you are fully vaccinated and do get Covid, the illness is much milder and therefore the viral load you expose others to is lighter.
8. **HYGIENE** – It's a good time to remind kids: cough or sneeze in your elbow, give people space, notice what you put in your mouth (something others touched or tasted, etc.), and wash hands before leaving home and immediately upon returning.

VACCINES

It's our recommendation that all vaccines be up to date, but if they aren't, just write a letter for our file why not. The county has stated in the past that if there's an outbreak, they may not allow unvaccinated kids to attend schools & child care. I don't know where that will leave camps. If there's a serious outbreak of a highly contagious disease that some of our kids are unvaccinated for, we *may* have the unvaccinated drop out of camp and we'll refund 25%. Here are the general recommendations:

<https://www.childcarelaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Know-the-Law-About-Immunization-Requirements-for-Children-in-Child-Care-in-California-2.16.22.pdf>

FORMS

The following forms must be turned in BEFORE your child can be left here. If you or your child's ride show up on the 1st day without these forms, your child may NOT stay here until the forms show up.

1. Registration Form	4. Identification and Emergency Information
2. Contract & Waiver (which references this handbook)	5. Consent for Emergency Medical Treatment
3. Health & Safety Information	6. (optional: Medication Permission Form)

MEDICATION

Please DO NOT give child medicine to bring to camp (including vitamins, herbs & homeopathic meds). We can administer medicine IF you request, fill out, sign, and turn in the Medication Permission Form. Otherwise, we do not administer anything, including Diphenhydramine if they have an anaphylactic reaction, or even sunscreen or homeopathic or herbal formulas, unless we have specific permission on that form. **We suggest parents apply sunscreen every morning.** If they're sun-sensitive, zinc oxide should last all day. We keep the following "medications" here in case children whose parents have authorized it need it: Children's Acetaminophen; Arnica (homeopathic – pills and ointment); Diphenhydramine (=Benadryl); Bactine, Pepto-Bismol, & sunscreen.

LOCAL OR NATIONAL EMERGENCIES

We reserve the right to close the school for a period of time if the administration believes that it is necessary for the safety of the children or adherence to law. There have been 5 occasions in the past that we've needed to do that: 1) an outbreak of (possibly) swine flu, 2) local flooding & power outages, 3) twice - unhealthy air quality due to smoke, 4) Covid March 2020 on. Though these are all considered circumstances beyond our control, we'll 100% refund families the pro-rated amount for any time camp has to close for MORE than a day. So for examples: 1 day = no reimbursement. Closed 3 days = 2 days reimbursement.

FOUND OBJECTS AT SCHOOL

Anything found on the property belongs to the school & owners, including but not limited to arrowheads and other historical artifacts, special rocks, etc. We do encourage nature collections by children so there will be plenty of natural objects they're allowed to take.

TICKS

We do immerse in nature. Yes, even playing hide-and-seek in tall grass. Please check your child's body EVERY SINGLE DAY when your child returns home. Deer ticks are extremely small. Ask us for a "tick card" if you aren't positive how to ID them. If you find a tick, keep it moist and take it to Sonoma County Health Dept. for testing and let us know results, please. If it's a deer tick and it bit your child (or you), get antibiotics ASAP from a specialist in Lyme Disease. One can be found through your local Lyme Disease support group (which can be found online).

DROP-OFF & PICK-UP PROCEDURE

Drop-off is at 9:00, not before, and pick-up is at 3:00, not 3:10. Please ALWAYS SIGN IN OR OUT on the clipboard in the sign-in area. Please remind anyone else who is driving to sign in & out. Visual or verbal acknowledgement by a staff member is required upon delivery of children. Children can only go home with people who are listed on the "Identification and Emergency Information" form! Please make sure the drivers in your carpool are on listed on this form here. If someone's not on this list, we will not be able to release your child to them unless it is amended by you. Please also let us know very clearly if your child will be picked up that day by someone on your list and write it on the sign-in form. If we notice a child being picked up by someone other than the parent without a seatbelt for that child (or a carseat if still required), we will not release him/ her. (We are not responsible for checking though).

LOITERING

We love to build community with social time, but try to keep to 10 minutes after pickup and drop-off. It's a long day for everyone already. It's dangerous having kids here longer than that, as there can be confusion over who is watching the kids. The parking lot is close and sometimes groups of kids wander to areas parents can't see or pick an excess of plants, etc. Our property is not 100% kid-proofed! Please note: climbing our big redwoods is no longer permitted here. WATCH YOUR KIDS whenever it's after 3 or before you transfer care to mentors in the morning. I highly recommend arranging park dates, etc. with other Wildflowers families as continuing this connection is precious. Thank you.

SHARED PRIVATE DRIVEWAY / PARKING!

Wildflowers is located on a private drive that is shared with 2 other households. PLEASE, for this program to continue, it is imperative that parents carpool and everyone give the neighbors the utmost respect by driving slowly and only parking in the driveway area of the school. Please pull as far in as possible to allow for the other cars to park in our driveway. Please DO NOT PARK ON THE SHARED DRIVEWAY. It's OK to park in front of garage! On the lane, use pullouts, or back up whenever you see a car coming the other way. Go slowly, to respect neighbors and because it's sometimes tricky seeing a car coming around a corner or out of a driveway. Apples, grapes, prickly pears, blackberries, raspberries, & roses on driveway belong to neighbors. Lastly, but most important, be VERY CAREFUL pulling in & out, as children are hard to see. Keep children close to you when walking.

CARPOOLING

We are hoping that most people will carpool out of: 1) duty to the planet, 2) compassion for the neighbors & our relationship with them, 3) wanting to contribute to safety of our parking lot, 4) helping drop-off & pickup to flow smoothly, 5) building community, 6) helping our kids learn to be brave, friendly, and open to new situations, and 7) making new friends. We will offer a \$70 rebate for carpooling all week. We'll tally the number of times you noted that one way you carpoled, multiply by \$7, and write you a check sometime before Sept. On the sign-in sheet, be sure you mark if you carpoled or not if you want the rebate. (Many just donate the rebate to our scholarship fund). We recommend that each driver carry a note from the other parent with emergency phone numbers and a signature below a statement that you give permission to treat in an emergency.

READINESS

All children must be able to hike up a steep hill on a hot day without assistance. All children must be able to use the toilet by themselves. If you believe your child may experience separation anxiety or have toileting accidents or stress behaviors or have trouble sitting through long crafts or nature journaling, then we're sorry but they're not ready for this camp.

COMMUNICATION

For logistical questions, after class is fine for a short chat, but please don't bring up sensitive issues about your child in front of them. If you have an issue to discuss, don't hesitate to call Bev 707-479-1052. Communication's important. Feel free to call after camp. If you need to contact us during the camp day, I recommend texting both Bev and Buzz 707-481-2710. But no guarantee we will check texts during camp either.

ABSENCES

All parents must let us know if your child will be absent on that day. Please send a text to Bev 707-479-1052. No reimbursement will be given for absences.

WORKING FARM

There are tractors, tools, barbed wire, and unfenced areas. We may utilize the wild land behind us due to generosity of a neighbor. A mixup could happen and we get near cows, but we'll be trying to avoid that. Teach kids that awareness of nature includes awareness of hazards. Kids may see or even handle dead animals, wild and domestic. Any handling will be followed with handwashing. Kids may see that we kill gophers in traps (otherwise, they'd eat everything).

ITEMS AND PRESENTATIONS FROM HOME

To avoid conflicts and reduce desires, we ask that toys from home stay home. Relevant TOOLS of nature such as binoculars, magnifying glasses, or compasses are allowed in the backpack (not on strings around their necks). Children are welcome to bring in nature items to share at circle or loan to our "Nature Museum" here. On WEDNESDAY, we encourage everyone to bring a musical instrument from home or one of their making or finding. We encourage bringing animals in to share with us, as long as it's set up with us at least 1 day ahead.

KNIVES

If a child 8 or older has had safety lessons from parents & has used their knife with parents on multiple occasions, demonstrating to parents that they know the basics of knife safety, and passes a safety test by Bev, then either a knife with a secure sheath can be kept in backpack, or a pocket knife that locks when open is allowed in backpack or pocket or belt. Unlocking knives like Swiss Army are discouraged. If lock is too hard for kids, teach them to stay put & call adult over to help close it. Teachers can rescind this permission at any time. Child must ask permission of teacher EVERY time knife is taken out. For the older group, we *might* do a focused lesson on knife safety and either whittle or make primitive crafts such as burn spoons & bow drills. Junior mentors may get training in knife safety and do some of these advanced crafts.

CELL PHONES

We ask that any children with a cell phone please turn the phone off during the hours the program is running AND KEEP it stored in their daypack. If there's a situation in which you need your child to leave it on, parent needs to discuss that with Bev ahead. If we see a phone out without permission, we will confiscate it for the day & they won't be allowed to bring it again.

TV & VIDEO GAMES

Children who watch TV and video games really DO affect the school environment and other children. Their fantasy and discussion often focuses on scenes from TV or video games. Disturbing or over-exciting scenes are often acted out in order to deal with them. We request families to be careful about selecting quality & quantity of media for children, especially the day before camp. One exception is occasional non-animated shows on animals because it's hard to imagine how animals move & live without seeing them.

ELECTRONIC WORLD VS. NATURAL WORLD

The greatest threat to returning our kids to the nature-based life children have had for millennia is today's electronic-based life of youth culture. As a group mentoring children to bring them closer to nature, we can be a support structure for parents and kids to assist each other to live unplugged more.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

CAMP FEES

In our sliding scale, **choose an amount that reflects your income & assets and your charitable heart**, sharing the gift of nature connection camp with kids whose families might struggle with the fee. If you need help even paying even the lowest figure below, please call Bev at 707-479-1052. It's possible we may be able to give you a little scholarship &/or work trade, depending on how many parents pay the higher figure. Another way to

donate to scholarships is by letting us know to skip the carpool rebate. **Rate is \$430 to 550 per week,**

BUT if you carpool everyday, you can earn **\$70 rebate!!!** (Making camp rate **actually \$360-480.**)

Many donate their rebate to our scholarship fund. Please use honest generosity as your guide in choosing the rate. We usually have a few kids on either full or partial scholarship.

TUITION ASSISTANCE

There is public money to help you pay for camp here! Please contact either River to Coast Children's Services (Russian River & Occidental) at <https://rccservices.org/> or Community Child Care Council ("4C's") at <https://www.sonoma4cs.org/> to see if you qualify for child care funding.

CARPOOL REBATE

We are offering \$14/day (or \$7 one way) rebates for every enrolled camper that arrives in or is picked up with another enrolled camper. By June 20, we'll email a roster of everyone opting in on registration form for giving contact info to help organize carpools. Networking on the 1st day is also encouraged. Rebate procedure: Fill in box on sign-in form each day for each way you carpooled. At the end of the week, there will be "carpool rebate" forms out at the sign-in area. If you don't want to donate your rebate to our scholarship fund, fill one out & put in payment can. If we don't get a form, we'll assume it's a donation. We'll issue rebates by check to mailing address on registration form, by no later than September 1st.

REFUNDS

Cancellations made before May 1 will receive 90% refund. Cancellations between May 1 and 14 days before camp will receive 50% refund. Cancellations less than 14 days before camp are not eligible for any refund.

LATE PICK-UP FEE

There is no after camp care. All campers need to be picked up at 3:00 M-Th and 1pm Friday. If parents pick up their child more than 15 minutes late without previous arrangement, they may be billed \$10 every 10 minutes they are late. If it is not paid by Thursday of camp week, child cannot return on Friday until paid.

TERMINATION OF CONTRACT

This arrangement can be terminated or modified by the director if the safety or well-being of the other children or mentors are at risk from the child's behavior or if the parents do not uphold the responsibilities contained herein. In these cases, a refund of tuition will be given on a pro-rated basis.

INSUFFICIENT FUNDS

Bounced checks will incur a fee of \$30.

REGISTRATION PROCEDURE

Text Bev to make sure there's still space. 707-479-1052. We're giving alumni priority until May 1 before we promise other spots. (But if you have to know before that, call Bev). We'll fill spaces according to a priority for alumni, then family of alumni, then everyone else. Otherwise, other than keeping age & gender balance, it's 1st come, 1st serve.

Option 1: Mail registration form and payment to:

Wildflowers Nature School
PO Box 54
Graton, CA 95444

Option 2: Email registration form to info@wildflowerkids.org and paypal by sending payment to info@wildflowerkids.org (remember to check "friends and family"!). For venmo info, text Buzz at 707-481-2710.

FURTHER INFO

Please read handbook for more info.

For questions, (in order of speed of response): Text, call, or email:

- Owner, Bev Buswell for any other questions: (707) 479-1052.
- info@wildflowerkids.org
- Owner, Mark Buswell for bookkeeping questions: (707) 481-2710.

- Either:

1. Mail registration form and fee to PO Box 54, Graton, CA 95444

Or

2. Email registration form to info@wildflowerkids.org and paypal fee to info@wildflowerkids.org. (remember to check "friends and family"!). Or ask me about venmo.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Rev. 4-13-24