



Fox Meets Bear

NATURE PRESERVATION

Welcome to the Woods!

Nature Preservation is an incredible way to connect with the earth, document a moment or season in your life, and preserve not only an earth grown item but a memory too.

Taking the time to encapsulate an experience is really easy, special and important!



Supply List

- Frames
- Harvesting knife or clippers
- Basket or Bag
- Paper
- Pen
- Acid-Free double stick tape

The frames can be old, new, thrifted, or custom. Glass Display Boxes can be ordered online through Amazon by searching for "Glass Top Display Box with Metal Clips". They come in an array of sizes and hold more three dimensional nature finds. Back the inside with white, black, or colored felt, a thicker paper, or a section of linen.



1. Harvesting with Consciousness

The first step is to gather with kindness. Whether it's a pine cone, a leaf, blooms, a juniper berry sprig, a small section of moss or a mushroom, they must all be cut and trimmed, picked and pulled so that the rest of the plant is still able to thrive. My favorite tool to bring along with me for foraging and gathering is an Opinel knife or small clipping scissors that fit in my back pocket or backpack. A mushroom should not be pulled up from its roots, but instead cut straight at the base of the stalk so it can continue to propagate and multiply. Be sure to harvest only what you'll use for edible foraging or for preservation. Trim or gather gently and wrap in a small cloth or inside of a basket to keep protected. If your journey is far and you're with small children, always bring a book to layer items like leaves or blooms inside to keep flat. That way you can still focus on the needs of the babes without worrying about the treasures. After all, connection is the point of it all. Most State Parks allow the collection of berries, mushrooms or cones for personal use while in a state forest. But you must get a permit from the DNR Forestry office closest to the state forest to cut or remove any trees or plants for any reason, remove wood from state land boundaries, harvest Christmas trees or boughs, or to collect a large amount of berries, mushrooms, or dead fuelwood to take home for personal use or for sale. Be sure to research your local state park regulations and rules!



2. Be There. Be Present.

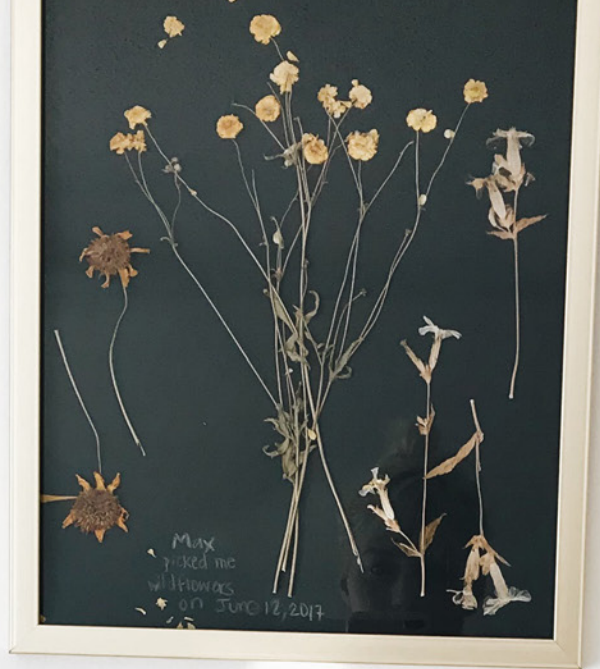
Leave your phone if you are able to. Be present and experience what the air feels like on your face. How does your mind feel outdoors? What questions can you ask your children to know them better? If you are hiking alone, think about the best parts about yourself. Think about the parts you wish you could improve. Consider this season of your life. As days turn into weeks, turn into months, turn into another season passed... reflect on where you are and who you are and where you want to go in life. Even if all of that is so unknown, just offering a little more presence to those questions can be so beautiful.

3. Take Home. Clean. Dry.

Lay the items out flat on a towel. Wipe or brush clean any dirt off and bring any bugs that tagged along, back outdoors to live free. This is a great step to integrate children into the process! If you have the time, take each item to research it's origin, growth period, whether edible or not, and create a "mini book report" about it. Anytime I've done this for the girls, I've ended up learning just as much about the species or nature find!

MUSHROOM FLASH BAKE:

If a mushroom is inedible but beautiful and meaningful, it can be preserved. The moisture level will matter in preservation depending on the size of the cap and stalk. If you can put it between your two fingers and it measures bigger than 1/4" then you'll want to set out to dry in the sunshine, or otherwise do a flash bake. To flash bake, set your oven for 425-450 and wait until it's preheated. Set the mushroom on a flat pan and put in the oven for 7-10 minutes. It will dry up most if not all of the moisture so you are able to preserve it better without mold growing. (Trust me, I've had my fair share of accidental mold preservations...whoops!) Take out of the oven and let sit to come back to room temperature.



4. Document

On a piece of paper, write down as much or as little as you'd like about the day, the season you're in either in your mind or the actual season on the calendar. Write about what your child said that day that you'd want to remember. What is he/she like lately? Interview them with questions and write down their answers. Draw a sketch just for yourself. Write a letter just to your child that they can open up at a later date. Sign and date the letter. With non-toxic tape, attach to the inside of the frame or directly on the back.



5. Preserve

To preserve, imagine a sort of layout you'd like to see. Let yourself be free in creativity whether they are all in a scientific type straight line, or if the nature finds form some sort of flow on the paper. Imagine and decide if you'd like to see each piece in a more minimal way, then plan to show one nature find in each frame. Maximalist? Coordinate the items so they work together, tucking each one next to another with enough white space present to appreciate each thing. Before beginning, write a title on the lower hand side and don't forget to include the date as well. Then with the double-sided tape, begin to gently cut very small sections as if to use the least amount of tape as possible and tuck it behind the nature find. This holds it in place during the framing and hanging process and keeps the items together and in tact. Once all the items are on the page, gently lift up towards you and lean forward to test and make sure all the items are secure. Take the glass and the frame edging and set on top. With both hands, secure and flip over. Tuck your documentation or letter in the back if you haven't already, then place the back of the frame on to secure tightly! Some items will retain exact color and texture, who others will slowly dry and change in color. This is so special and all a part of the preservation process. Some of my favorite preservations started a bit bright, but then as the days went on they turned into more of an earthy toned visual which I felt so much more drawn to.

6. Volunteer and Give Back

So many state parks have volunteer programs and needs that make for an excellent activity with kids to integrate a state of gratitude to the earth. Volunteer opportunities can be registered for through most regional websites and occur throughout the state at State Parks, State Forest Campgrounds, Wildlife Management Areas, fisheries and hatcheries, wildflower bomb planting in the Spring, baking cookies, teaching classes, or nature photography. If you're on a hike in your own town, seek ways to give thanks through the care and preservation of each naturally grown area. Hiking in a local park? Give back by picking up litter when you see it or teaching your children simple ways to care for the earth, even if through verbal appreciation for what you see!

Happy Preserving!

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at FoxMeetsBear@gmail.com

If you enjoyed this, it would mean so much to me if you would tag me and share a screenshot or link to this free resource on social media!