

Outdoor Family Fun

When your kids are aching to get outside, engage their imagination with fun projects courtesy of Nathan Larson, education director at Troy Gardens

Create a Garden Gallery Tour

Why: The garden is a great place for children to learn about using natural materials.

Perfect for: Little explorers (toddlers and older) who need a new activity.

What you need: A range of plant and other materials from the garden (think leaves, rocks, sticks and flowers), unused berries (or non-toxic paint), paper and paper cups.

- **Step 1:** Lay out your paper, then create borders using branches, long sticks, and/or rocks to create “frames” on the ground. Explain that you’re opening an art gallery and the kids are supplying the paintings.
- **Step 2:** Mash the ripe berries (or pour non-toxic paint) in cups and use the mixture for finger painting on your paper.
- **Step 3:** Start creating! Make it messy and artsy. Use trinkets from the garden to embellish the paintings and at the end, do a gallery tour and have everyone show off their creations.
- **Step 4:** To preserve the masterpieces, take photos of the children and their finished art.



Craft Nettle Rope and Flower Jewelry

Why: Stinging nettle is often considered an unwelcome weed in the garden. However, the stems can be used to make a rope perfect for braiding.

Perfect for: Children just a bit older (ages 7 and up), especially those who can braid.

What you need: Stinging nettle plants from the garden, leather gloves, knife and scissors (for the adults!) and flowers.

- **Step 1:** Harvest some stinging nettle. Make sure that you are wearing long sleeves and leather gloves to pull the plant out of the ground.
- **Step 2:** Get rid of the leaves with a scissors or knife so all that you’re left with is the stalk. Hold a knife perpendicular to the stem and scrape off the hairy spines. Now that the needles have been removed, the nettle plant is safe for young hands to handle.
- **Step 3:** Pull long strips off the outer layer of the stalk for braiding and gather a variety of flowers from your garden (Queen Anne’s lace, clover or other flowers with long, thin stems work well).
- **Step 4:** Weave flowers into the nettle rope braid, and tie the ends to make a natural bracelet, anklet or necklace.

Ask Doctor Mom

The must-know safety tips for summer



By Dr. Kari Hegeman

Ah, summer at long last. As you gear up for action-packed, fun-filled days, here are the key safety tips every parent should take with them on summertime adventures.

Keep an eye on the driveway: An unfortunate amount of children are harmed by back-up accidents. Make it a habit to walk behind your vehicle before backing out of the driveway and set clear boundaries for children when they play near parked cars.

Splash safely: Infants and toddlers should be under constant supervision and never more than an arm’s length away in or near water. Avoid floaties as they provide a false sense of security, drain pools after use and never head into open water or on a boat without a life vest.

Mow with caution: Children 12 and older can be taught to mow the lawn, but instruct them to wear sturdy shoes, pick up the yard first, and never pull the mower backward or leave it unattended while running.

Careful with the fireworks: Avoid home fireworks. Even sparklers can reach up to 1,000 degrees and cause burns.

Protect their skin: Avoid combination sunscreens/bug sprays, as sunscreen must be reapplied every couple of hours and insect repellents are meant to be applied just once per day. To ward off bugs, children older than 2 can use DEET-based bug repellent, avoiding hands, face and any irritated or broken skin. Applying bug spray to clothing is a great way to avoid applying it directly to skin.

Check for ticks: If you find a tick, use a tweezer to pull it straight up and away from the skin. Wash the area with alcohol or antiseptic. Call your pediatrician if you think it may be a deer tick and was embedded in your child’s skin.

Keeping these simple guidelines in mind will help your family safely enjoy what summer should be about: fun in the sun and adventures in the great outdoors.

Dr. Kari Hegeman is a pediatrician at Dean Clinic and mother of six children, ages 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8.