

WHEEL OF THE YEAR WREATHS



Explore the phenomena of changing seasons by creating “Wheel of the Year Wreaths!” As children return to school for a new season of learning and personal growth, and the transition from summer to fall looms on the horizon, this beautiful activity is a creative way for children to explore the concept of change and cycles on both a nature-based and a social-emotional level.

What is a “Wheel of the Year?”

A “Wheel of the Year,” or “Wheel of Time,” refers to a circular object that is adorned with natural items that mark the cycle of changing seasons. Some include decorative items that note the various celebrations associated with those seasons. Their aesthetic draws focus to what each season gifts to us, predominantly centered around the beauty, food, and sustenance of the earth. Before clocks and modern-day calendars, a Wheel of the Year functioned not only as a decorative item but also as a calendar!

MATERIALS

A round base

- This can be a wreath, an embroidery hoop, flexible branches bent into and secured in a circle, or even a hula hoop. It just needs to be round- Get creative!

Flexible wire or pipe cleaners

- Craft wire will blend in unnoticeably while pipe cleaners will add color and texture.

Various foliage

- Synthetic natural items such as silk flowers and leaves will make it easier to capture all the colors and foliage of the different seasons, and will also allow the wreath to last all year long. You may also choose to use organic items, however it may be difficult to find all the colors and different plant styles to represent each season.

Optional:

- Decorative items that note holidays.

**Note: All these items can be found at local dollar stores!*



METHOD

- 1) Collect/purchase foliage that represents all four seasons. Suggestions include autumn leaves and mini pumpkins for fall, pine tree sprigs, holly berries, mini icicles, and blue hues for winter, white and pastel flowers, mini bunnies, and eggs for spring, mini suns, bold and brightly colored leaves and flowers for summer.
- 2) Lay out your materials and separate your foliage and decorations into different piles depending on their seasons.
- 3) Begin to attach the items to your round base with wire, adding season by season until each clearly transitions into the next.
- 4) Hang on door or in home or give as a gift!



OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPANDED LEARNING

Making a Wheel of the Year wreath provides opportunities for children to learn about the cycle of the seasons and change in natural systems, however it also allows them a chance to reflect upon their own growth and change. Has your child recently started a new grade level in school? Lost a tooth? Grown a shoe size? Cyclical change is around us all the time, and making connections between the earth's progression and our own personal growth can help children face transitions with a touch of comfort and deeper understanding of the beauty of change.

Consider These Activities:

- Take a nature walk together and make observations about the changes happening outside as we transition from summer to fall. What color are the hills? How dry is the soil? What animals do you see out and about? What animals seem to be missing?
- Track and journal the changes you experience outside. What time does the sun set each week? Does the sky look different from one week to the next? What about the changing temperature?
- Pin a large piece of paper to a wall and measure/record children's heights on the first day of autumn, then the first day of winter, then the first day of spring, and the first day of summer. Do the same for their feet. They can see how they are evolving with the Wheel of the Year!

Explore These Links:

[Why Do Animals Shed Their Skin?](#)

[Why Do Seasons Change?](#)

[How Do Animals Respond to Changing Seasons?](#)

[Why Do Leaves Change Color in the Fall?](#)

[What is the Life Cycle of a Flowering Plant?](#)

This "At Home Nature Adventure" is dedicated to our long-time camper Zoe Rae, who inspired this activity with her creativity and artistic insight. Zoe Rae just finished her final year of Arboretum Nature Camp- She has attended from 4 to ten years old. We wish her well as she enters a new season of life and transitions to middle school. Go get 'em, Zoe Rae!

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