FALL 2018 — The change of seasons this time of year makes outdoor youth education particularly fun. New smells, new colors, and new noises can reactivate a sense of wonder for young people. With all of the exciting changes happening in the outdoors, it's also a great time as educators that we remember that interacting with nature in a hands-on way can and should be a part of activities that engage young people in Leave No Trace.

Tactile interaction with the natural world (touching, handling, feeling) at a young age is one of the contributing factors to an authentic and developmentally appropriate experience in the outdoors. I would also make the argument that this concept is important to older youth as well, particularly those who may be truly experiencing the outdoors for the first time. If you are a strong supporter of the Seven Principles, you might be wondering, "...does this contradict what it means to Leave What You Find?" In fact, it does not! Remember that the principles represent ethical guidelines, not rules. Within the framework of Leave What You Find, we can decide which tactile experiences are going to maximize benefits to youth while also minimizing impacts to the outdoors (i.e. teaching young people how to respectfully touch trees with various bark textures to promote questions like, "what does bark do for a tree?" and, "why is it important to not peel bark from living trees?")

There are certainly some types of interactions and destructive actions that can take place in the outdoors when people do not respectfully engage with objects found in nature— those are important to point out and discuss with youth. For the most part, however, in keeping with the Leave What You Find Principle, there are many ways that we can all promote inquiry and authentic experiences in the outdoors while learning about the ways to protect and promote Leave No Trace. Enjoy the outdoors this season, educators!

See you out there,

Andrew Leary
Leaving No Trace Means Learning & Adjusting

Hindsight can provide a different perspective on what it means to Leave No Trace. Shanti Hodges, founder of Hike it Baby, shares one such experience. Check out her takeaways and future Leave No Trace considerations for exploring with youth.

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Raising the Bar for Leave No Trace Education

Avid4 Adventure and Outdoor Outreach lead the field as the first Leave No Trace Accredited Youth Programs! See what they had to say about the process and the benefits they've seen through the accreditation.

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Featured Activity: Leaf What You Find

In line with building tactile experiences into the curriculum, this activity does just that— utilizing some of the plentiful natural materials we find this time of year... leaves!

Explore More

Featured Educators: Victoria Carson et al.
Check out this incredibly collaborative group at Cossatot River State Park - Natural Area! Park Interpreter, Victoria Carson, coordinated programming for DeQueen and Wickes Elementary Schools; presenters from Arkansas State Parks, US Army Corps of Engineers, and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission conducted rotational programming; and State Advocate, Rob Stephens, along with the Arkansas Leave No Trace Chapter provided the outline for the Leave No Trace trail activity. Thanks to this group of dedicated individuals, over 400 youth were reached during the two days of programming. Y'all rock!

Submit YOUR activities, games, and ideas! - Each newsletter will highlight a Leave No Trace educator with a unique approach to engaging youth in Leave No Trace through games, activities, and more. Email julia@lnt.org with any leads.