



DIY CLAY NATURE ORNAMENTS

Materials you need:

- 1 Cup Bicarb Soda (Baking Soda)
- 3/4 Cup Warm Water (not hot).
- 2/3 Cup cornflour
- Leaves, twigs, herbs, flowers from the garden (the more textured the better).
- Rolling pins or just collect some small branches like we did to use instead.
- String, cord or twine to thread through holes and hang. Straw for pressing holes
- Cookie cutter or playdough shapes

Setup for play:

- Go on a nature walk around the yard and encourage the children to choose some greenery, twigs or flowers they like from the garden.
- Measure and add the bicarb and cornflour to a saucepan (I suggest non-stick if you have it!)
- Measure the warm water and stir through the dry ingredients.
- Make sure to try and include the children in the 2 steps above if you can to incorporate measurement, counting, mixing and volume!
- Place saucepan on a medium heat and whisk gently until the mixture begins to bubble – doesn't take long so don't leave unattended.
- Now use a wooden spoon to stir the mix quickly until you see it begin to come together like a soft cooked playdough. Don't wait until there is no stickiness left or you will end up with a very crumbly dough as the heat continues to cook from inside.
- Take off the heat and cool while you set up the creative space. Place a damp washer over the top of the dough so it doesn't dry out and begin to form a crust.

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- Pass out smaller sections of the clay dough and show children how to knead it or squish together in hands until it is soft and comes together ready to roll out. It should look similar to white playdough.
- Show the children how to add the bits of leaf, petal, lavender and other flowers to their dough and squish and roll to get it all inside the dough.
- When they are happy with their clay creations they can roll it out then cut out their shapes.
- Place a hole in the top of the shape using the straw then bake in a very slow oven for an hour (this will depend on your oven though). You could also leave them in the sun to harden.
- Tie a piece of wool or string through the hole and hang those creations for all to see!

What are they learning with this activity?

As the children help to make the clay, choose the natural materials then squish and roll into their clay before shaping they are learning to:

- Use descriptive language and become independent communicators
- Listen to and follow directions
- Use hand/eye coordination skills and demonstrate spatial awareness
- Manipulate equipment and real life tools with increasing competence
- Manipulate objects to explore motion, cause and effect
- Strengthen fine motor muscles and control
- Use their senses to explore and choose natural materials
- Express themselves creatively



Extending the play:

- Make the clay together on another day then roll balls to thread necklaces. Remember to poke a hole through the centre for threading. You might like to add some food colour or edicol dye to different sections of the clay to create a coloured necklace.
- Use some of the leftover twigs, leaves, greenery and flowers to make nature paintbrushes by attaching to sticks using rubber bands or tape.