



## 6 DIY Toys from Nature

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Think back to your childhood: you probably have fond memories of spending long hours outside playing in dirt or exploring your neighborhood during the long summer break away from school. These days, more often than not, kids are spending more time indoors glued to the TV or playing video games. As summer days are dwindling down, it's only natural for kids to lose their summer excitement as family vacations wrap up, but they don't have to spend the last few days of summer indoors.

Fortunately, it's still warm outside, making these last few weeks before school an excellent time to work on [outdoor summer projects](#), while planning new ones for fall. Nature often makes the best teacher, and kids love to explore and create. Make the last few weeks of summer memorable by creating DIY kids toys from nature!

Whether you're looking for summer nature crafts to do right now, or ideas to store away for the future, let's explore worthwhile projects your child will enjoy!

### Sensational Summer DIY Toy Ideas

Perfect for exploring the great outdoors while the temperature is still hot, these easy nature crafts will keep your child busy searching for supplies and designing the final product for hours.

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[As summer DIY projects come to an end, send your child back to school armed with the best learning tools on the market! Give your child's skills a boost and download our renowned Talented and Gifted app, now only \\$1 for the first month!](#)

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#### DIY Nature Tic Tac Toe

Everyone loves a good game of Tic Tac Toe, but the best part of this version is hunting outside for materials to use! This game features a DIY wooden game grid, and stones or pebbles your child will design and paint!



#### Supplies Needed:

- A collection of twigs or sticks, each of similar length
- Several smooth stones or pebbles
- Twine, or twist ties
- Acrylic paints, paint brushes, and a permanent marker (optional)

#### What to Do:

1. Head outside on a warm summer day and help your child find and collect sticks and stones or pebbles. The key is to find similarly sized sticks and stones for the game. Try to find at least 4 twigs around the same length, and 10 smooth stones. Set all materials aside to make a collection.
2. Help your child make the Tic Tac Toe board by taking the four sticks and assembling them in a Tic Tac Toe grid. Wrap a twist tie or piece of twine around each point where the twigs intersect.
3. Start painting the stones! You can paint classic "X" and "O" letters on the rocks, or get creative and make personalized designs! Be sure both player's stones are designed similarly enough to tell whose game pieces are whose. Alternatively, your child may choose to design each stone differently, but mark an "X" or an "O" on each, using the permanent marker.

4. Begin playing Tic Tac Toe with your child, or call in a sibling or friend to share in the fun!

## Hanging Stick Mobiles

Sticks are probably the oldest toys known to mankind. Kids have been playing with twigs for generations, and they make excellent building blocks for nature crafts of all kinds! This fun activity for kids tasks your child with collecting sticks and making them into beautiful pieces of décor!



### Supplies Needed:

- Yarn in the colors of your choice
- Scissors
- Acrylic paints and paint brushes (optional)
- Your child's choice of beads
- Feathers (optional)

### What to Do:

1. Go outside and tell your child to make a collection of sticks. Try to find sticks that are similarly sized, but they do not need to be exact in length.

2. As with most arts and crafts, the options for creating this hanging mobile is limitless. First, help your child decide between painting each stick, or wrapping each in colorful yarn. Once decided, start creating colorful sticks to hang using the yarn.
3. Next, create a hanging mobile by tying yarn on each end of horizontal sticks. Estimate the yarn you'll need to connect a few layers of sticks, all connected by string. You may use one continuous piece of yarn, or you may use several pieces to connect the sticks rows.
4. Decorate by slipping on beads or tying feathers onto the mobile.
5. Hang the mobile wherever your child pleases!

## DIY Paint Brushes

Don't head to the store to buy art supplies, when DIY kids toys can be made using natural tools found outside! These exciting paint brushes will liven up your child's art collection by offering fun new brushstrokes and textures to paint with!



### Supplies Needed:

- Several small twigs
- Twine, string, or twist ties
- Materials to make bristles, like tree buds, spruce needles, cypress leaves

## What to Do:

1. Outside, collect small twigs, about the length of a paint brush. Make sure to find twigs thick enough to fit comfortably in small hands. Gather tree needles and leaves to use as bristles for the paintbrushes.
2. You'll need to assist your child while putting together the brushes by arranging the leaves neatly around the end of each twig. You may want to use a rubber band to hold the leaves together while you tie the twine or twist tie around the stick.
3. Wrap the twist tie or twine around the stick at the point the leaf material meets the end of the stick. Wrap this several times and tie it shut tightly. Be sure to cut off any extra string.
4. Use the paintbrush to paint fun nature paintings, portraits, and masterpieces, and explore the different types of patterns and textures each brush can make!

## Fabulous Fall Nature Craft Ideas

If you have enough projects lined up to get your child through the dog days of summer, why not store away ideas for fall crafts and activities? Keep these ideas in the back of your mind for outdoor fun when the leaves begin to fall.

### Acorn Necklaces

Kids love fashion accessories they can wear, and it's even better when they can get creative to make jewelry themselves. Acorn necklaces are easy for kids to make, and helps kids get out of the house for an afternoon.



### Supplies Needed:

- Acorns with tops
- String
- Drill
- Wood glue
- Acrylic Paint
- Fine tip permanent marker

### What to Do:

1. Wipe any dirt off the acorns and ensure they are clean and bug-free before you begin.
2. Help your child take the tops off each acorn.
3. A parent or adult will need to use a small drill bit (about 5/64") to drill two small holes in the top of each acorn. Help your child thread the string through the holes and tie together on the underside of each acorn top.
4. Kids will paint each acorn, and decorate in any way they wish! Feel free to draw faces using the fine point permanent marker, since the tops look like little hats!
5. After the acorns are dry, glue the tops back on to the acorns, and enjoy your new necklaces!

## Leaf Rubbing Collage

There's no better way to decorate for fall than by collecting leaves and making a beautiful nature collage by rubbing images of leaves. A classic kid craft idea, leaf rubbings never cease to make amazing art. Dress up your house for fall with this gorgeous activity!



### Supplies Needed:

- Drawing paper
- Crayons
- Leaves

### What to Do:

1. On a cool fall day after the leaves have begun to fall, head outdoors to help your child collect different types of leaves to use for their collage.
2. Back indoors, instruct your child to pick fall colors to use for their artwork. Once chosen, get busy peeling the paper wrapper off each crayon.
3. On a clean, flat table, have your child arrange the leaves in any order they wish, as long as the paper can fit over the top of each leaf. This might mean that leaves overlap, and that's ok since this project is a collage of different leaves!

4. Place the paper over the leaves, and carefully begin to rub the crayons over the leaves until the pattern is drawn all over the sheet of paper. Encourage kids to use different colors around the paper, in any order or pattern they choose.
5. When finished, feel free to frame or hang your piece of art to display for the entire family!

## Pine Cone Flower Bowl



You've probably seen pine cone crafts like wreaths in the winter, but this fantastic fall idea will produce beautifully painted pine cone flowers your child will love!

### Supplies Needed:

- A collection of pine cones
- A bowl
- Acrylic paints and paintbrushes

### What to Do:

1. Go outside with your child and hunt for pine cones to collect. Find multiple cones and head indoors to prepare them for painting.



2. Instruct your child to flip each cone over, since the bottom of the cones will be the flower they'll paint. Begin by taking off some of the petals on the bottom to make the pine cone more tapered to create a stem.
  3. Together, use acrylic paints to paint the pine cones in the colors of your chose. Paint the stems green for a natural appearance. Feel free to layer paint and apply several coats for depth and brightness.
  4. Once the paint is dried, arrange the pine cones in a bowl to reveal gorgeous flowers
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As you can see, DIY kids toys are easy to make from scratch simply by stepping outdoors and collecting materials to use. Simply begin by planning projects that will keep the summer excitement alive, while lining up fun-filled fall ideas to keep your child busy and learning through nature!

