

# *Wild Cascara Naturalist School*

## *Guidebook*

### *Welcome!*

Here at Wild Cascara Naturalist School you won't find your average school, let alone outdoor program. Wild Cascara blends models of education from forest schools (*Erin Kenny, CedarSong Way*), Waldorf, and Montessori, and includes practical homesteading skills to support our students in becoming ready for their community.

As the founder, I believe in Earth-forward learning that centers nature as our teacher, as well as principles of reciprocity in how we care and tend to the Earth we inhabit. I seek to uplift qualities of care, accountability and authentic community in all our activities out here.

The vision at Wild Casara is to build a community that is centered around care for each other as well as our more-than-human kin. We value compassionate communication that supports the whole of the community in relation to our individual needs. We understand that your child is important to you, and we also understand that it's important to have respect and perspective when dealing with everyone's children and each other.

This guidebook is meant to help lead you through what you can expect when coming to school at Wild Cascara. It includes policies, holiday/break information, programming, and more! We're always here to help and are excited to connect with you. Should you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at the phone number or email listed below.

All my best,

Teacher Juniper

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503.502.0581

## *Introduction*

What is a naturalist school?

Are you looking for a school program that gets your kids outside *and* educates them in meaningful life skills? Wild Cascara Naturalist School is a hands-on immersive program that blends lifelong learning with a foundation of Reciprocity towards the Earth. This program seeks to redefine the 19th Century philosophy of 'Naturalist' by infusing and accepting the spiritual, magical and mystery of this Earth. Our purpose in this is to reconnect our human selves with the innate intelligence of this planet and all living creatures who reside here. Students are needing education to adapt to the growing needs of their community, environment, and culture in order to support them and what they are facing for their future.

Students are allowed to cultivate an intrinsic curiosity for learning alongside the principles of respect and reciprocity for the Earth which are woven within the curriculum. This foundation of learning helps to instill a deeper connection between the student, the activities and the world that surrounds them. Students study a variety of topics from rivers and water, birds and flight, trees and land stewardship. The second half of the day focuses on foundational academic skills of reading, writing and mathematics in small group work based on our unit of study. These groups are organized by grade/age. School is held on a 20 acre 'forest farm', a beautiful combination of farm life and natural forest which affords students to integrate their learning in real time. Students meet in both an off-grid schoolhouse and on the land.

## *About Wild Cascara*

Outdoor education is becoming more common here in the so called United States (originally known as Turtle Island), however Wild Cascara recognizes that our original learning as humans has always been in relationship to land. When people are connected to land they find greater care not only for land, but for each other and all living inhabitants. We feel that when students are given access to build a relationship to a natural space they are allowed to access their wider potential both creatively and emotionally. Starting their education outdoors leads to building a child's physical stamina, risk taking, and intrinsic motivation. They are given space to allow for their natural curiosity which supports project based/place based learning. Allowing for peer to peer unstructured play gives students opportunities

to problem solve and process to build up their own autonomy in a safe supported space. We aspire to help raise children who are flexible, creative, resilient, confident, and empathetic.

### Our mission:

We aim at Wild Cascara to foster a nurturing and reciprocal relationship with the Earth, this land, and our more-than-human kin for people of all ages and backgrounds.

### Our Vision:

We aim to create a community that educates each other from an Earth-centered perspective that prioritizes Indigenous knowledge and promotes collaboration.

### Schedule and Curriculum

- 4 days a week, Monday-Thursday
- 10-15 Students total
- 9:15-3:15 (15 min window for drop off/pick up)
- \$60-\$85 sliding scale/day
- 2 BIPOC scholarships of 50% off
- Partial financial scholarships available
- Location: Cascara Forest Farms (Eagle Creek, OR)

### *Our Curriculum*

Wild Cascara blends the principles of place-based and inquiry based learning with the natural seasons and cycles of our Earth. Students are invited to inquire on certain themes that are current and present for the time of year. Lessons are subject to change based on the student's interests and discoveries. The following is a general outline of topics students can explore:

- September - December 15th
  - Intro to Outdoor School
  - Fall Equinox
  - Learning the Elements in relation to us (6 senses)
  - Seasons, Cycles, and Energetic Properties
  - Our 'more than human kin'
  - Who's Land do we live on, Indigenous Peoples Roles

-Salmon Study  
-Winter Solstice/The Cosmos  
[Three week Winter Break]

- January 4th - March 15th
  - Rocks and the Earth
  - Storytelling, Folktales and Culture studies
  - Weather, Clouds and Water Cycle
  - Rivers and Watersheds, Protecting the Waters, Damns
  - Birds and the Magic of Flight
  - Spring Equinox

[One week break]

- April - June 17th
  - Native Tree Identification,  
and the role of trees in our lives
  - Plant and Garden Study
  - Bees and Pollinators
  - Self Study to benefit your community/Community  
Project

[Summer break July/August]

## *Teaching Philosophies*

create understanding amongst peers/ socially construct understanding amongst peers; unstructured play time; facilitated guidance by adults to widen lens of learning; growth mindset, nonviolent communication -feelings/needs/requests; nature as teacher, seasonal approach to learning -what is happening in the environment and how do we as humans respond

## *Equitable Practices*

Wild Cascara acknowledges that this program and the founder (Juniper Post) come from a background of Northern European descent and inherently hold levels of privilege. It is also known that the program is run on stolen land from the Clackamas and other local indigenous tribes (Chinook, Clatskine, members of the La Grand Ronde Tribes). It is the job of myself as founder of this program to be steadfast in

creating an environment that addresses my privileges, seeks to dismantle any areas of white supremacy, and work to tend to the land with respect for what has been taken from the indigenous groups.

Wild Cascara is in the ongoing process of learning to make the school accessible to all. Wild Cascara prioritizes empathy, respect, and understanding, regardless of differences in schools of thought, orientations, cultures, or creeds.

The following is a link to a small and ongoing list of resources for unpacking white privileges, as well as respected authors who seek to dismantle privilege within the school systems.

[Resources on: Transformative Justice, Dismantling White Supremacy, and rela...](#)

## ***Communication Guidelines***

In order to respect the varied and deep experiences others bring, we as a community will agree to:

- communicating to each other respectfully from a feelings and needs perspective, as well as listening to understand (connection before correction)
- Communicating from a place that acknowledges best intentions from both parties and seeks to acknowledge impacts of actions
- Talking to the teacher first of any incidents or interactions that need tending to and not going directly to other families until an agreed upon action is created.
- Giving conflict a 24 hour reflection period with an agreed upon time for problem solving and repair; first communicating the issue with respect then allowing for both parties to have time to reflect and connect with the needs and actionable requests for the situation; teacher and administration will be direct facilitators in these scenarios
- Keeping what is best for our kids and our community at the center of all conversions and decisions.

### Line of protocol for reaching out to Teacher Juniper

- *Email/phone call for:* Big questions, sensitive questions, financial needs, student behavior/academic needs, absences or vacation time from school days

- *Text messages:* short and simple communication (running late, gratitude, appreciation) non school related

Please email or call before feeling a need to start a text thread

In ANY emergency at school I will call right away. For bumps, scratches and minor injuries I will text you (as soon as possible) and let you know what happened and how we tended to the injury, as well as let you know at pick up at the end of the day. Tim and Juniper will both be on the property to support and attend to any accidents and injuries

## ***Code of Conduct***

We recognize that students come from a variety of backgrounds and all have different needs. Our ability to make accommodations to our behavioral expectations is based on whether those accommodations allow us to meet the above priorities.

Depending on our ability to make accommodations within that framework, Down to Earth Forest School may decide that the student's interests will be served better in a learning environment different from the one the Forest School can offer.

### ***Our behavior progression:***

1. Setting expectations clearly and early. This allows students to know what the limits are and engage with questions before the activity even begins.
2. Redirect to purposeful activity. If the behavior persists, have a private conversation and problem-solve with students.
3. Set clear guidelines, and make agreements with the student about their behavior; this includes agreeing on potential consequences/outcomes for different choices as well as a clear timeline for improvement. Caregivers are contacted and informed on the agreements made between the student and teacher.
4. Check in with the student on progress periodically and check in's with caregivers.
5. If the behavior persists in a situation where these steps have been followed and we are still facing behavioral challenges, we will schedule a longer sit-down and focus on creating a plan for supportive behavioral interventions.

6. If after creating a plan for behavioral support with both teacher, caregivers and student agreements are not upheld there is the option of the student taking a break from school and participating in land service projects.

7. There is an agreement that if further support is not working the teacher and administrators can request that the family respectfully exit the program and find alternative forms of education.

## ***Accommodations***

Wild Cascara aims to offer programs that meet the emotional, developmental, and physical needs of students. Naturalist school is a good fit for many children but it is not right for all children and is not the answer to every child's needs. While we are committed to providing high-quality educational experiences to children of all abilities, we may not have the specialties to offer the support at the level required for all students.

Please let us know during the enrollment process if your child may need emotional, cognitive, and/or physical accommodations that may require specific support. We work with families on a case-by-case basis to determine if we have the resources to provide the level of care that ensures a high-quality experience for each child.

We believe that nature is critical for the developmental needs of all children, but Wild Cascara is not a one-size-fits-all program. As we continue to grow as a program, we are prioritizing training and developmental opportunities specific to addressing the needs of differently abled children in a forest school setting.

## ***Land Agreements***

Wild Cascara is run on private land shared by three families. We ask that you follow our land agreements in order to respect the space of others as well as the land. As a community member you will agree to:

- 1) When driving on the property please maintain a speed between 5-10 miles per hour
- 2) Please stay on gravel drives; if you need to navigate with another car on the driveway please: be respectful to each other and use either the parking spaces in front of the school house, at the end of the driveway or in front of the tiny home to pull out.
- 3) Please do not block the main driveway
- 4) Park on gravel only; either by the school house or at the far end of the drive

- 5) Please respect private spaces such as the farm house, barn, animals, green house and tiny home.
- 6) No farm equipment or mill equipment shall be used, touched or facilitated without permission; all tools are to be respected and used only with permission
- 7) Pack it in, pack it out. Please maintain your personal trash and personal belongings
- 8) **If the front gate is not working please call** either Juniper (503-502-0581) or Tim (503-422-7111) immediately; please do not make attempts at opening or fixing the gate if there is an issue
- 9) Please respect the wildlife and plant life; ask before taking, use only what you need, give thanks and gratitude back to the land and landowner, and find ways to give back -either to the school community, or the Earth community

## *Tuition and Scholarships*

- Tuition is based off a \$60/day base line; those who are able to offer more towards tuition can pay up to \$80 per day.
- Tuition is paid either: monthly, seasonally (three months), or per year for a four day school week (9:30-3:15) at 38 weeks total
- Financial Scholarships are available upon request; those who identify as BIPOC and would like to receive support for reparations are offered 50% off of tuition.
- 10% of tuition goes towards the support of the Native American Youth Alliance (NAYA), any surplus of tuition funds may also be allotted towards community organizations
- Parents and caregivers understand that this is a grassroots, community supported program and all funds go towards building and creating a small school community

monthly	\$960
seasonally	\$2,880
yearly	36,480

## *Enrollment Policies*



## *Volunteer Agreements*

## *Community Agreements*

### *When to Stay Home*

Children who show signs of illness should not be in school. This is for your child's health as well as that of the other children and families in our school community. This also relates to any symptoms of Covid-19.

A child should not come to school if they have one or more of the following symptoms:

- Fever over 100 degrees. Your child should be free of fever for at least 24 hours before returning to school
- Diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stools per day)
- Nausea or vomiting
- Severe cough/ cold symptoms (excess mucus, sneezing, coughing, runny eyes)
- Skin or eye lesions or rashes that are severe, weeping, or pus-filled.

If your child contracts a communicable condition such as chicken pox, measles, pinworms, lice, impetigo, pink eye, etc., report it to the school immediately so that other families may be alerted to possible exposure. No mention will be made of the child or family's name in any notification.

### *Outdoor Risks and Experiences*

Our outdoor sites are evaluated often for possible hazards including but not limited to heavy, dead, overhanging branches; damaged trees; and wild life. Elements of the site that are deemed hazardous will be mitigated through removal, and avoidance.

One of the many benefits of allowing children plenty of time to play freely outdoors is the increase in self-confidence and independence. This occurs, in part, by taking reasonable risks and testing limits. Our goal is to allow reasonable risk taking, balanced with watchfulness for true safety hazards.

*Climbing*

Children are permitted to climb as high as they are tall and must be able to reach that height by themselves (teachers will not lift them up to a place that they cannot reach themselves).

### *Throwing*

Children are permitted to throw sticks, acorns, and other natural objects AWAY from the group, and away from trails or other places people might be walking. Teachers will help define throwing zones when needed.

### *Exploring*

Boundaries are clearly communicated and agreed upon by both teacher and students. This means that children are always directly in sight of a teacher. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that children do not accidentally stray from the group. Students who deliberately run from or leave the group after a maximum of two “warnings” will be asked to withdraw for safety reasons (a “warning” consists of sitting down with the student and working to understand the root of the flight behavior). Teachers will work with the student to develop ways to mitigate the flight behavior, including incorporating caregivers into the discussion.

### *Stinging Insects & Toxic Plants*

If a child is stung by an insect, an injury report will be filed, and Children’s Benadryl or other approved antihistamine will be administered should a reaction occur. Poison oak is an abundant native plant at Wild Cascara. We are trained in identifying this plant and carry TecNu to apply to any infected areas. Parents will be notified and given instructions for follow up care.

### *Wild Edibles*

We love eating plants! I will explore some basic, easily identifiable wild edibles with children (huckleberries, blackberries, and licorice root, for example). As part of this exploration, children are taught to never eat anything from nature without permission from an adult, as well as honorably harvesting what we find.

### *Sticks*

Playing with sticks is part of childhood. We know that children will collect, carry, swing, dig, throw, and swordfight with sticks. Children are taught how to handle sticks safely. Fantasy play, including sword fighting, is generally acceptable if the play does not involve physical contact and the level of imaginary violence is not distressing to children who are not involved in the game. Teachers will redirect play that crosses physical or emotional safety boundaries.

## *Incidents and Emergencies*

Wild Cascara is trained in risk analysis and contingency planning; however, as in any school setting, injuries and emergencies may occur. We have developed the following Emergency Action Plan to prepare for and mitigate unexpected events.

### *Injuries*

Minor injuries may be treated with a first aid kit. Families will be notified of all injuries that break the skin or involve the head or genitalia.

In the event of a more severe injury such as possible concussion, fracture, burn, laceration (1/4" deep or more), etc. one teacher will attend to the student and apply first aid while the other will contact the caregiver or the emergency contact. In the event of an emergency, ambulatory services may be contacted first prior to alerting the caregiver to initiate emergency medical care that is outside of our educator's realm of experience.

### *Emergencies*

In the event of an emergency, such as severe head trauma, anaphylaxis, major fractures, excessive bleeding, or external threat, the following procedures will be followed.

- » All activities will halt and group safety will be prioritized.
- » The lead teacher will contact emergency services.
- » Patients will be triaged and emergency first aid will be initiated as instructed by emergency dispatch instructions.
- » The lead teacher will meet emergency services at the entrance of the property, if possible.
- » The lead teacher will contact Parents/Caregivers and Emergency Contacts as soon as practicable via phone call.

### **Liability:**

This is also an outdoor experience which lends to a full bodied, hands on, immersive experience. We kindly ask that you take all personal responsibility and liability for any accidents and injuries. I am CPR and First Aid certified. This program works outside of conventions and norms that typical schools are expected to adhere to by the state and federal Government. Consent for specific activities

will be outlined and agreed upon before the start of the school. This is a community supported program that depends on clear communication, kindness and trust for the overall wellness of Everyone. Any accidents or injuries will be reported and addressed in a safe professional manner for the wellbeing of each student and their families.

## **Gear List**