



## Take A Nature Walk

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Green Parent Rebecca Cohen puts her best foot forward everyday as she aims to honor and care for the earth. And more often than not, that leads her on a nature walk.

A mom to 2 boys (ages 4 and 6), Rebecca strives to teach her children about their connection to the environment by letting them feel that connection firsthand...outdoors. Why does she strive to go green?

“Each of us has an obligation to look at the impact of our actions and consistently raise the bar in changing our behavior if we want to try to repair the damaged planet that we’re leaving to future generations. By showing families more simple ways of enjoying the outdoors together, my intent is connecting people more to each other and to nature. That outside connection, I think, is the first step in raising many families’ awareness of what they can do to better their health and the health of the planet,” says Rebecca

Here’s how Green Parent Rebecca Cohen helps her boys learn about and enjoy the outdoors...

### Take a Nature Walk

by Rebecca P. Cohen

I am a gardening coach who believes that time outside transforms our lives for the better, and as a parent, I’m blogging more about outdoor ideas for families with young children. The inspiration for this blog was the recent 4th birthday party for my son, Warner. The “Outdoor Adventure” party was the most low-key and wildly successful of the at-home birthday parties we’ve had in my six years as a parent (my older son, Harmond, is six-and-a-half). We started with a nature walk, then had an educational animal show, followed by lunch, and water play.

The theme for the birthday party stemmed from one of our favorite activities as a family, the “nature walk.” Much more inspiring to a child than just “walking,” on a nature walk, I help the boys notice so much more about the plants, animals, and insects around them. I ensure they are safe, and allow them to climb trees, cross creeks, and “off road” to find a new way home. This tradition started at our last house, where there weren’t too many large trees around due to the new construction. So, we’d go find them, and walk to and through a nearby patch of forest, where we found a foot path beyond the paved path and a stream to cross. At

our current home, the boys consistently ask to go on nature walks, and I have taken their play dates on our nature walks with us. So, I thought that our little guests and their parents would enjoy a nature walk for a birthday party too.

We started the nature walk at 10:30a.m. in order to avoid the impending heat of the summer day. Upon arrival, each child's parent received a brightly colored sheet of paper with an itinerary on the front and instructions on the back, which read "[Child's Name]'s Outdoor Adventure." There were three destinations on the walk, which began on a mulched path at the end of our street: a footbridge over a creek, a picnic shelter, and a campfire. At the footbridge, children had to answer a multiple-choice question about the animals that Warner has seen in the woods around his house. At the picnic shelter, the children colored a picture of a bald eagle printed from the internet, which also had a few facts about bald eagles (there happens to be a bald eagle's nest on the lake near our home). At the campfire, their colorful picture of the eagle got them a marshmallow to roast on an open fire. Yes, it was only around 11:00a.m. and yes, the s'mores were a huge hit with kids and parents!

In hindsight, the specific activities weren't needed on the walk. The kids had just as much fun noticing the spider webs, animal tracks, and places where animals may live, as we do with any walk when it's just our family. If you don't have the location for a campfire, but do have a microwave, the kids can walk back home and pretend to make a campfire with sticks they've collected on the way while you pop some marshmallows and chocolate between two graham crackers in the microwave for a few seconds. We do this for our nature walk play dates. To the kids, it tastes just as good as one around a campfire!

The consistent, impromptu compliments about the party and our ease during the party told me that there was something different about this celebration, not only for myself, but also for others. There was something about a meaningful activity for the kids and parents that brought everyone together, and it's something that I'll look to repeat, not only for parties or play dates, but also in everyday life.

### **About Rebecca Plants LLC**

*Rebecca P. Cohen believes that time outside transforms our lives for the better. As a garden designer and gardening coach, Rebecca's simple gardening and outdoor ideas inspire families to spend more time outside. You can find out more about Rebecca's company and read her blog at <http://www.rebeccaplants.com>. Rebecca can also be reached by email at [rebeccapcohen@mac.com](mailto:rebeccapcohen@mac.com).*