

# directions

Journal of the Association of Nature Center Administrators

## the Northwoods Summit Aug. 18-21 *Roots, Reflection & Recovery*

at Treehaven Environmental Learning Center, Tomahawk, WI

Corky McReynolds  
President  
Treehaven Environmental  
Learning Center  
Tomahawk, WI

a glimpse of the goshawk while walking through the hemlocks; a howling response from a distant wolf; the pileated woodpecker feeding outside the dining hall; these are all part of the Treehaven experience. Fourth graders in chest high waters discovering aquatic insects; inner city middle school students counting the countless stars; neighbors gathering for dinner then discussing the movie; hundreds of undergraduates preparing for tomorrow's causes; these too are all part of the Treehaven experience.

Treehaven hosted the first ANCA Summit in August of 1995. Twenty-



photo courtesy of Treehaven Environmental Learning Center

*Treehaven rests on a glacial ridge overlooking 1,400 acres of forest and wetlands.*

five participants experienced unique professional growth and networking surrounded by the best of Wisconsin's Northwoods. Welcome back ANCA!

Treehaven is located between Tomahawk and Rhinelander, Wisconsin consisting of 1,400 acres of quiet woodlands and wetlands. Trails meander throughout the property for exploring, tracking, and birding with opportunities to learn and view active land management. Will you find the hemlock grove, a three-acre deer enclosure or the upper bridge over Pickerel Creek? Along your journey we encourage you to discover your professional roots, reflect on your role, and focus on the recovery of our centers.

Treehaven, established in 1985, is a residential environmental learning center and home of the summer semester of the College of Natural Resources undergraduate

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Founded in 1989, the Association of Nature Center Administrators is a private non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and supporting best leadership and management practices for nature and environmental learning centers.

Serving nearly 500 organizations, ANCA is the leader in the profession.



Rooted in Experience. Reaching for Excellence.

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photo courtesy of  
Treehaven Environmental Learning Center

# Director's Notes

## Winter Board Meeting

Jen Levy  
Executive Director  
Association of Nature Center  
Administrators  
Logan, UT

Greetings from ANCA Headquarters! The 2010 ANCA Winter Board Meeting was held in mid-February at the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont (GSMIT) in Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee. Ken Voorhis, executive director of GSMIT, hosted his fellow board members and the ANCA staff for the annual two-day meeting. Ken and the entire GSMIT staff did a great job introducing us to their beautiful facility and surroundings, which will be the location of the 2011 ANCA Summit.

We arrived in time for dinner on February 18 and of course our meal included greens with instructions on how to eat them (vinegar and hot sauce - yum!). In addition to experiencing this culinary delight we had the opportunity to visit the weekly bluegrass jam at a local school turned community center. What a treat to wander from room to room and listen to the local talent that included amazing vocal harmonies, mandolin, acoustic guitar, banjos, fiddles, and the occasional stand-up comedy!

Of course the majority of our time together was spent focused on the business and activities of ANCA. Here are a few of the topics that were discussed:

I visited Treehaven in November and reported on the plans for the 2010 Northwoods Summit – see Corky McReynold's cover article for more details. Registration materials will be available in mid-April and thanks to Corky and his talented staff, this is sure to be another great Summit. If you are new to ANCA or have never attended a Summit you should know that many of our members consider



it the best professional development and networking opportunity for nature and environmental education center administrators.

One of the motions brought before the Board was a recommendation by the Finance Committee to create an Operational Reserve Fund and Policy. The primary objective of this policy is to establish a reserve that will permit us to continue to operate during difficult financial times. The main investment objective of this policy is capital preservation and liquidity. The motion passed and approximately \$15,000 of unrestricted savings was designated to launch the fund.

A new topic brought to the board was carbon exchange and how ANCA could facilitate "greener" Summits and help mitigate some of the impacts associated with Summit travel. We are just in the beginning stages of developing strategies so stay tuned or better yet, tell us what your organization is doing to address this topic.

While the days were filled with ANCA business, we did get a chance to take a short hike to a nearby waterfall and experience the beauty of the Smokies. In addition, several board members stayed on an extra day for a longer hike in the park that included views of the mountains surrounding the GSMIT campus and trekking along a streambed surrounded by a rhododendron jungle (OK – a jungle compared to northern Utah!).

program. For 12 weeks Treehaven hosts our majors in forestry, wildlife, water, soils, and environment education/interpretation.

Our youth programs focus on fourth grade, middle school, and high school students while our public programs offer weekend workshops and credit courses.

Treehaven hosts and sponsors several conferences a year. This is an exciting year of positive changes for Treehaven with dining hall refurbishing, recreation hall upgrades, land management activities, site improvements including new outdoor facilities, and the complete renovation of our two residential centers. Treehaven facilities include the Vallier Classroom Center, IL Young Lodge for dining and recreation, and residential centers with private baths.

To help you as a nature center professional explore your roots, reflect, and recover, we are planning workshops and experiences that combine expertise and sharing along with some fun and outdoor adventures.

Our Wednesday field trips include a visit with area school forests and the unique role their centers have with environmental education or choose to visit a wildlife education and rehab center.

Thursday's workshops include half-day sessions on Sustainable Land Management, Dynamics of Board Change, Greening Our Centers, Managing Up – Dealing with Your Boss, Developing Organizational Goals and Evaluation, and others. Featured will

be an all-day session held at our Summit co-sponsor, Conserve School, on Partnership with Green Charter and Independent Schools.

Thursday evening will feature a multimedia presentation from Jeff Reinke an accomplished author and teacher of wilderness value and experiences. We also look forward to honoring this year's ANCA Nature Center Leadership Award recipient.

Our Friday sessions include mini-workshops on marketing – Creating Your Message, and Social Media – Sharing Your Message. There will be many ANCA signature facilitated discussions including ecotourism;



photo courtesy of Treehaven Environmental Learning Center  
*Treehaven is the Wisconsin center for integrating natural resources education, management, research, and recreation.*

nature centers with museums; residential graduate programs; capital campaigns; paradigm shift in the workplace; best practices in donor cultivation; EE standards; and many others.

Friday evening is auction time! Do gators roam the northwoods? You'll find out!

Saturday continues our facilitated discussions and our Open Space sessions – another Summit signature event that allows participants to create a summit within the Summit. Bring your topic!

Saturday evening will be a Summit highlight. Imagine a Big Band on

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stage under the big tent in the middle of a big forest. Get ready to swing with Swing Shift.


Sunday our field trips highlight a canoe trip down the Wisconsin River or canoeing the Sylvania Wilderness. A trip to the famous Yawkey Woodsen Art Museum and Rib Mountain State Park are also available for an inspiring diverse experience.

Throughout the Summit you will find activities, exhibits, nature stores and as always, great food, fun, and fellowship.

There will be two types of packages for this Summit and all registration will be done on-line. Treehaven

has just completed a one million dollar renovation of our two residential centers which have room for single, double or quads. All rooms now have private restrooms/showers. Alternative lodging has been reserved at the Rodeway Inn and Suites about 8 miles from Treehaven. Scheduled shuttles will be available to/from the Rodeway.

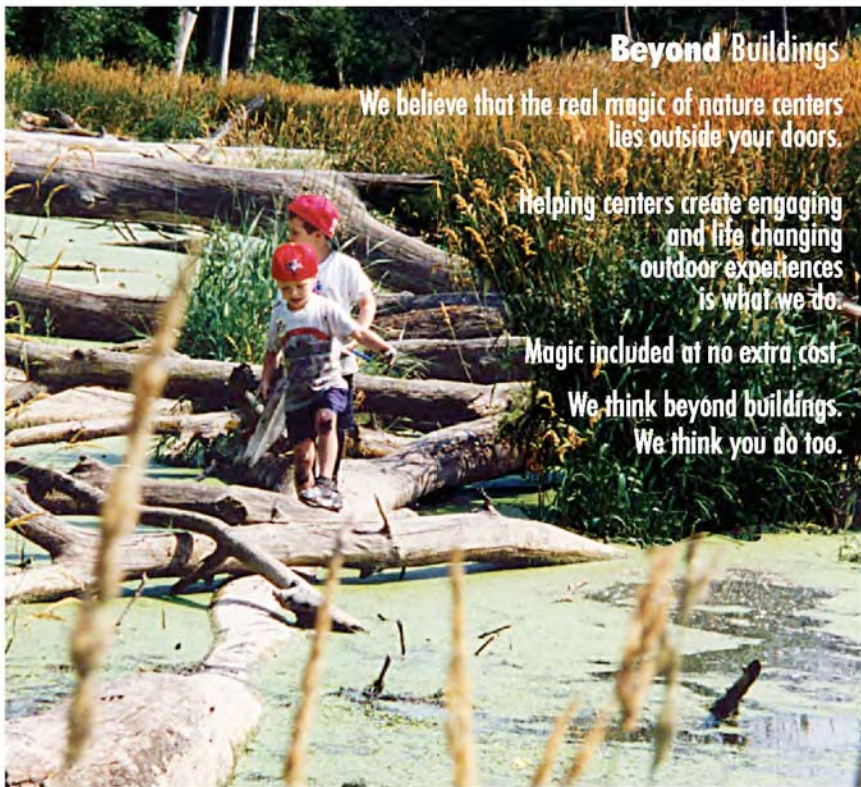
We invite ANCA to be part of the Treehaven experi-

ence. On behalf of the friends and staff of Treehaven we look forward to hosting the ANCA 16th Annual Summit. See you in August! 

*Charles "Corky" McReynolds, PhD, is Associate Professor of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources, College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin/ Stevens Point, and Director of Treehaven. Corky develops and teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in strategic planning, nature center management, and leadership. He has facilitated and trained facilitators for strategic planning processes at nature centers, state agencies, and national organizations. Corky's research, teaching, and consulting focuses on leadership and enhancing organizational change through effective individual and group processes. His workshops are known for high activity, involvement and fun. In 2004, Corky received the profession's highest honor, the Nature Center Leadership Award from the Association of Nature Center Administrators.*



photo courtesy of Treehaven Environmental Learning Center



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# From The Field:

## Design Principles for Nature Play Spaces *in Nature Centers and Other Natural Areas*

Ken Finch  
President  
Green Hearts Institute for Nature in  
Childhood  
Omaha, NE

Part 2:

Design Elements and Guidelines

*In the Winter 2010 edition of Directions, Ken Finch offered core principles to guide the design of nature play spaces at nature centers. Offered in this issue are more specific suggestions for such play spaces. They will not apply to every situation, but hopefully they will spark the reader's own thoughts and ideas.*

### • Site Right.

Try to integrate your nature play space into your current habitats, rather than creating a “stand alone” play area from scratch. Use existing logs and boulders for balance and climbing areas, keep a downed tree as another climbing option, take advantage of natural topography, open up safe access to a shallow stream, etc. Be sure to choose a site that is handy for visitors: near a main trail, but not bisected by it. Drinking water and restrooms should also be nearby, and plan for maintenance vehicle access.

### • Accessibility.

Provide all-persons access to a representative sample of play opportunities, but realize that full access is probably not going to be possible. Nevertheless, seek out local experts and advocates who can help you to make your site as realistically accessible as it can be.

### • Don't Over-design.

Your design should be based on a realistic projection of visitor usage. Really heavy use will require more

hard-surfaced paths and probably more artificial features — things that dramatically raise costs and are more permanent. Thus, consider creating an initial plan to serve the lower end

Kids love small, confined spaces where they feel enclosed and protected, but still have an outward view. Psychologists call this “prospect and refuge:” the security of enclosure,



photo courtesy of Stokes Nature Center

*Shallow, rocky streams are perfect for play and are relatively safe.*

of your expected usage, with allowance for changes and expansion if needed.

• **Separate but Equal.** If your site's play features are crowded within a limited space, add more intimacy with live internal “baffles” of tall grasses, shrub rows, or vine-covered fencing. You can also encourage different types of play through the design of these outdoor “rooms.” For instance, a swinging bench set amidst a dense circle of shrubs is a perfect place for quiet, contemplative play.

### • Keeping Secrets.

with the advantage of visual range. Use natural dens, small clearings in tall grass, a shrub thicket (per above), or a giant hollow tree to provide these small, “secret” niches. Encourage kids to stay longer by equipping some of the spaces with a hammock, a hammock chair, a rocker, a bench, etc.

### • If You Build It . . .

there's a good chance you're wasting money! Structures like crude forts and shaky tree houses have long been a part of nature play, and they are still appropriate for a nature play

site. But don't go overboard with elaborate and spectacular structures. Instead, facilitate similarly creative and dramatic play by using a cheap tent, an old boat or canoe, a sunflower house, or a vine teepee. If you do build a fancier structure, keep it naturalistic by avoiding plastics and bright colors. And before you decide to include a spectacular tree house or an expensive fort, consider how much habitat enrichment you could achieve for the same dollar investment — with a resultant increase in value for both play and wildlife! (Green Hearts' favorite statement about landscape architecture for nature play is this: "more landscape, less architecture!")

• **Loose Parts.** Speaking of structures, why not just let the kids build their own? Provide them with a good supply of "loose parts": materials that can be used and re-used endlessly. Good possibilities are sturdy branches, tree "cookies," tarps and blankets, cobblestones, evergreen boughs, large sheets of cardboard, mud, etc. With such materials kids can design and build their own forts and dens — providing far more play value than any ready-built structure. And each day's young visitors can either add-on to yesterday's structure, or tear it down and start over. You can help younger kids by providing a lasting "skeleton" framework that the children can add to and/or cover.

• **Think Small.** Your personal nature play space might be a 50,000-acre wilderness, but for kids you should think on their scale! To best engage and excite children, keep paths, structures, plantings, and challenges all significantly smaller than what you would choose for adult visitors. It really doesn't take much to delight a five year-old, to whose eyes the world is incalculably larger than it is to yours! More small delights will keep kids playing longer than will a few

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larger-scale ones.

• **Getting High.** Children love to climb — for the challenge, for a sense of accomplishment, and for the view. But realize that for younger children, the “peak” doesn’t need to be more than three to six feet above the ground. Kids can enjoy climbing and height by running up grassy hills, scrambling over a pile of giant boulders, going limb-by-limb up a small but sturdy tree, or even ascending not-too-steep ladders. But whatever climbing feature you choose, be sure to provide a deep, soft fall surface under and around the climbing apparatus. (Ask a local playground inspector for advice on fall surfaces, or refer to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission’s Public Playground Safety Handbook, [www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/325.pdf](http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/325.pdf))

• **The Sound of Music.**

Children love to play simple musical instruments, and that is a great developmental activity. But is it a good fit with nature play? Green Hearts feels that the best soundtrack for nature play is the music of nature itself: singing birds, humming insects, a gurgling stream, whispering pines, raindrops in the leaves, gusting winds, or the soft rattle of a quaking aspen. All of these are too-easily drowned out by human-built musical instruments! Instead, design your space to feature natural sounds through the use of bird and insect gardens, plots of tall grasses, thoughtful tree plantings, a rocky stream, etc. Help children to hear and

enjoy nature’s music by locating quiet niches and secret spaces in or near these symphonic features.

• **Real Dirt, Real Simple.**

Children love to dig, but you may not want them shoveling away just anywhere on your property! So give them a large, cleared digging pit where kids can unearth grubs, worms, roots, rocks, and other treasures! Or you can dump a giant mound of soil on your chosen spot — the bigger, the better! (The size of a two-car garage



photo by Bob Bailie

*Consider what makes great nature play, but don’t worry about perfection. Just open the door and let the kids get started!*

will do nicely....) Such a vertical digging pile may not contain as many natural specimens, but it can be easier for young kids to enjoy.

• **Pond-ering Water Play.**

“But a child can drown in just two inches of water,” you’ll likely hear as soon as you raise the issue of water play. This is true; they can. They can also die from tripping over a root and hitting their head on a rock, by being stung by a bee, or by having a meteor fall on their noggin. Better just lock ‘em up inside, eh?! But think of all the park ponds and lakes where fami-

lies picnic and play, of all the ocean beaches swarming with children, and of all the subdivision drainage ditches just calling out to kids’ playfulness. Playing in water within an intentional nature play area may be the safest option of them all!

The best-case scenario is to have a very shallow, rocky, natural stream flowing through your play area, with easy access to its banks. On the other end of the spectrum might be a raised outdoor water table, made to look

more natural through gunnite construction. The re-circulating water in such a contraption does let kids have fun (and learn some science) by splashing, floating twigs and boats, and scooping and pouring water to their hearts’ content. But they will find no dragonfly larvae under rocks, no amphibian egg masses, no turtles, and no water striders — nor can they just sit quietly and dangle their toes in the cool stream.

Between those two extremes lie artificial water-play options that won’t capture the full ecological richness of a natural stream, but which can approximate it while providing good play opportunities. One approach is to create a shallow (think inches) re-circulating stream at ground level, twisting and turning, dropping slowly in elevation, and filled with cobble-sized rocks that can be easily manipulated by small hands. Add a few quiet pools (just three or four square feet, and no more than a foot deep) plus native vegetation

along the banks, and such a stream should support a limited ecosystem full of child-scale discoveries and delights.

While shallow, rocky streams are perfect for play and are relatively safe, deeper ponds don't fare so well on either count. And placing a pond that's deep enough for fish (several feet, typically) right next to a shallow play stream is potentially dangerous, as younger children may not distinguish between the safe option and the dangerous one. So deeper water features are not good choices for active nature play spaces. However, there are a couple of ways to make them safe. One is to mount a heavy metal or plastic grid just below the pond surface. This will need to be strong enough to hold children, tight enough not to trap heads or feet, and anchored firmly all around the circumference of the pond — not a simple task! An easier approach is to backfill a deep pond with gravel, to within a few inches of the water surface. This will not support fish life, but it will let emergent plants sink their roots deeply through the gravel, and will provide zillions of little niches for aquatic insects. Kids can walk right out into the pond, amidst the cattails, rushes, etc.

Of course, kids can also have great water fun with hoses, sprinklers, buckets, and rain barrels, but these tend to be more “outdoor play” than “nature play.” There's nothing wrong



photo by Ken Finch

*Nature play has been found to be the most common influence on the development of adult conservation values.*

with those options, but they may not be the optimal approach for a nature center. So if you can afford the time and expense needed to create a flowing play stream, it will likely become a real focal point of your nature play space.

Note: re-circulating streams will generally be forbidden within the designated play space of a licensed nature preschool unless they include a full (and expensive!) biological filter. Contact Ken Finch for alternative approaches that can often be used in this scenario.

• **Wonders of Wildlife.**

A good nature play site should have a lot in common with an intentional wildlife habitat area, including extensive native plantings for food, shelter, and nesting, along with water sources that can range from a bird-bath to a mud hole or a small marsh. Include nesting boxes, feeders, a brush pile, a toad house or two, an insect garden, and micro-habitats that are appropriate to your region — e.g., a stone wall or a sand pit.

• **Back to the Garden.**

Or maybe not! Planting and tending a vegetable garden is a great experience for young children, but it requires long-term, on-going involvement. Thus, gardening is perfect for a preschool or a charter school. However, a vegetable garden doesn't offer so much for a nature center's infrequent visitors. Instead, plant some “pickable edibles” that visitors might enjoy during the right season, like grape vines, a large berry patch, or even a few semi-dwarf fruit trees.

• **The Grassy Knoll?**

Turf grass is something of a biological desert, but it does have play value as an area for running, rolling, cloud gazing, or just resting. So consider including a bit of lawn in your nature play area, perhaps as a transition zone into wilder spaces. Use

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# Profile:

## Bringing Nature Back II -

### Audubon Louisiana Nature Center Recovery Continues

Amy LeGaux  
Disaster Recovery Coordinator  
Audubon Nature Institute  
New Orleans, LA

It's been two years, another hurricane, and a recession since "Bringing Nature Back" was published in the Spring 2008 edition of *Directions*. In May of 2008 we planted another three acre area adjacent to the first planting with the help of our new National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) team and Entergy employees from around the state. Although this was not the optimum time to plant bottomland hardwoods, Entergy has supported the reforestation efforts at Audubon Louisiana Nature Center through the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana (CRCL) and it was the only time they were available. Volunteers continued to help us manage both planting sites; removing Chinese tallow seedlings and weeding around the newly planted trees.

In 2008 a new herbicide Clearcast® was being touted as the cure for invasive Chinese Tallow. It looked very promising, was thought to be tallow specific and have 90% control with additional mortality to follow. We again partnered with the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) and sprayed Clearcast® on a test plot at the Nature Center. Unfortunately the results were disappointing; foliar spraying at low rates as directed seems to be inadequate to destroy the roots. The tallow trees were "sick-

ened" but so were adjacent elms and mulberries and regrowth occurred. The USDA-NRCS and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) had similar results at other sites. So for now it is back to "slash and spray" cutting individual trees and treating the stumps with Garlon.

The Nature Center's impacts from

it was just me and 73 year-old veteran volunteer Glenn Oussett.

Entergy had committed an additional sum of money for clearing and replanting; so in the late fall the two of us began to machete our way through blackberry brambles and Katrina debris to flag off a 2.5 acre area for clearing and replanting.

We actually found a lamp post that had floated into the forest during Katrina while marking the trees we wanted saved. We held four planting days in December 2009 and January 2010. Nearly 200 volunteers braved the inclement weather; thanks to El Niño's record setting rain, and planted 1,200 trees.

To date we have cleared and replanted 10 of the 86 acres of bottomland hardwood forest that was destroyed in Hurricane Katrina with the help of Entergy, the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Restore America's Estuaries, and countless volunteers. The recent planting site was reforested with trees donated by RPM Ecosystems LLC. RPM trees are grown with the patented, all natural (non-GMO) Root Production Method producing high performance native trees from

Louisiana gulf coast seed stock that is not genetically altered.

When CRCL Science Director, Natalie Snider initially told me about RPM's donation, I knew nothing about the company and thought they were just another grower. Without running water and volunteers to maintain the planting areas I wanted a density of 500 trees per acre. But,



photo by Amy LeGaux

*Volunteers braved the rain and 40° temperatures to plant 1,200 RPM Ecosystem trees this winter.*

Hurricane Gustav were minimal, just a few more downed trees. But Gustav and Ike sent our NCCC teams to southwest Louisiana and Texas and by the time teams were again available for Katrina-related damage the recession had hit. Funds for housing teams were no longer available and the part-time volunteer coordinator position was eliminated. Once again

after learning about the company and how the trees are grown from owner PJ Marshall I felt comfortable with 350 trees per acre.

I now realize that with their expanded root system RPM trees are better able to survive seasonal flooding and other stresses. They have a lifetime accelerated growth rate and reach maturity earlier, resulting in seed production for regeneration and wildlife food in less than five years for most hardwood species. Because of their different growth habits, only 40-50 RPM trees are needed to canopy and regenerate one acre of land.

and providing high performance gulf coast native trees for the restoration of forests in the state of Mississippi following the two hurricanes hitting the gulf coast in 2005.

We received delivery of our trees in two shipments with PJ personally driving the red maples from New York to New Orleans. When we unloaded the trees and I finally saw more than a thousand, eight month-old trees that were up to my shoulders or more in height it finally hit me how lucky we were that RPM had chosen the Nature Center as one of their restoration projects. The trees are



photo by Amy LeGaux

Volunteers braved the rain and 40° temperatures to plant RPM Ecosystem trees this winter.

After meeting PJ and one of her associates, Leslie Carrère, in person at the Brownsfields conference in New Orleans and seeing RPM trees for the first time, I knew RPM had the Nature Center's best interests at heart. During that meeting I became aware of RPM's efforts on the Gulf Coast and their nomination for the Arbor Day Foundation's 2010 Excellence in Partnership Award. RPM has been involved in directly securing \$2.8 million in funding, to-date,

all incredibly healthy and their roots filled the 3 gallon pots they arrived in. They were also much easier to plant than standard trees; with the hole only having to be dug as deep as the depth of the pot and two to five times the diameter. Compared with bare-root seedlings or direct seeding, RPM trees and shrubs have advantages and superior qualities for conservation, restoration and other applications.

The Root Production Method is a

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grass species that are hardy in your area and that require little maintenance beyond an occasional trim.

• **Tree Travelers.**

Kids have been climbing trees for eons, and so far our species has survived this calamitous threat to life and limb! The best climbing trees are sturdy shade or fruit trees with low, horizontal limbs — the kind that take many years to grow from scratch! So try to include one or more such existing trees within your nature play location. If you have one, you can give kids a little boost up with an attached, sloped climbing net, or even wooden cleats firmly bolted into the trunk. But don't inadvertently encourage kids to try to go higher than what their best instincts are telling them, and be sure to install a good fall surface, as mentioned earlier.

Another good climbing option is a large fallen tree. Such a "sideways" tree offers multiple levels of climbing, since its main limbs are now largely horizontal. This lets children choose their own level of challenge. For any climbing tree, be sure to trim off and smooth all sharp projecting branches, and cut out any "V" traps where children might get their heads or necks caught.

• **Library of Tools and Toys.**

Be sure to supply a selection of play tools and toys like magnifiers, buckets, air and dip nets, small shovels, basic binoculars, bug houses, paper, watercolors and/or crayons, carry bags or pouches, etc. Be sure to keep bug spray and sunscreen on hand, and provide used plastic bags to cover car seats when parents are hauling home muddy, dirty children! Also include a storage shed on your site for those

tools and toys, and try to provide an outdoor faucet for cleaning kids off — perhaps even a low, shower-type wash-off station, for really muddy kids!

• **The Point of Fencing.**

Nature play spaces for young children are best defined and confined by a boundary: attractive fencing, natural features, or a combination of both. This has obvious safety value:




*"The most effective kind of education is that a child should play amongst lovely things." – Plato*

keeping young kids from wandering off and getting lost. Equally important, a firm boundary makes parents more comfortable and more willing to let their children play spontaneously, without constant tending. Further, enclosing a play area can help tell children that this is their space, and that they really can play in it as they like! The boundary creates a clear division between "wild" land and the play zone, where children's behavior can be more adventuresome.

If you do use commercial fencing, make it as attractive and site-appro-

priate as possible. Wooden fencing screened with native vines or shrubs can work well, as can a rustic split-rail fence, backed with a wire grid fencing coated in green vinyl. In a natural setting, the green wire tends to disappear to the eye, while still providing a secure enclosure. Woven willow fences are another attractive and functional option.

**Conclusion:**

As nature play areas become more common and more heavily used, the best features and designs will eventually "rise to the top" within the nature center profession. Please do your part in this evolutionary process by generously sharing your center's nature play successes and failures! As Red Green would say, "Remember, we're all in this together!" 

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*Ken Finch has been working in the environmental education profession for more than 36 years, serving as the director of three nature centers and as a senior manager in two children's museums. He has been active with ANCA since 1991, including two years as President and seven years on the Board of Directors.*

*In 2005 Ken founded Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood, an Omaha-based nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to restoring and strengthening the bonds between children and nature ([www.greenheartsinc.org](http://www.greenheartsinc.org)). Green Hearts works across the country, writing, speaking, training, and consulting about nature play including conceptual design assistance for the creation of nature play areas. Green Hearts is also developing its first facility: a children's nature center in the Omaha suburb of Papillion.*

*Ken can be reached at [kfinch@greenheartsinc.org](mailto:kfinch@greenheartsinc.org).*

natural process found to positively affect trees, shrubs, and grasses, resulting in accelerated growth, increased root mass, early flower, fruit, seed, and/or nut production, and higher rates of establishment and survivability. I encourage all of you to visit their website at [www.rpmecosystems.com](http://www.rpmecosystems.com)


For now we are playing a waiting game: Audubon Nature Institute has decided to rebuild the classrooms and Science Resource Center at the highest property elevation, the moldy buildings are still standing, as we wait on a wetland delineation from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

The next step is to apply for a Coastal Use Permit (CUP); a joint application with Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Coastal Management Division (LDNR-CMD) and the USACE which will allow us to begin demolition. We continue to fight with FEMA over whether or not two of our buildings should be replaced or repaired and continue to wait for the USACE to determine that the Nature Center will be one of their borrow pit mitigation projects.

There is good news though – through its not-for-profit, The Restoration Tree Trust, RPM is donating 10,000 trees toward the complete restoration of the Nature Centers forested wetlands leading to a mature closed canopy forest in as few as 20-30 years. Actually seeing the Nature Center as a mature closed canopy bottomland hardwood forest again in my lifetime will be even better than the SAINTS winning the Superbowl! 🌱


*Amy LeGaux served as Acting Director of Audubon Louisiana Nature Center for the two months prior to Hurricane Katrina and as their Education Curator since 2003. She has been involved in Environmental Education for the past 30 years.*

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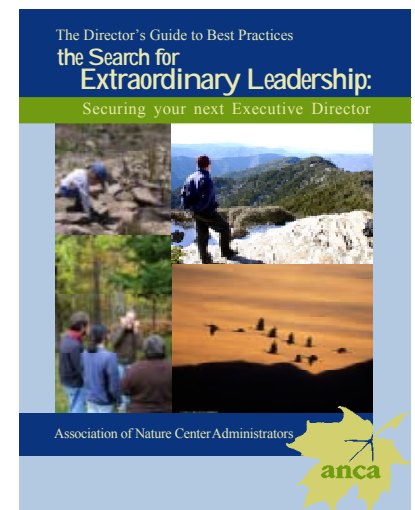
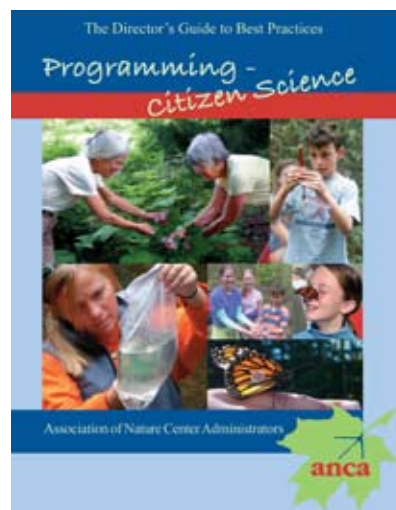
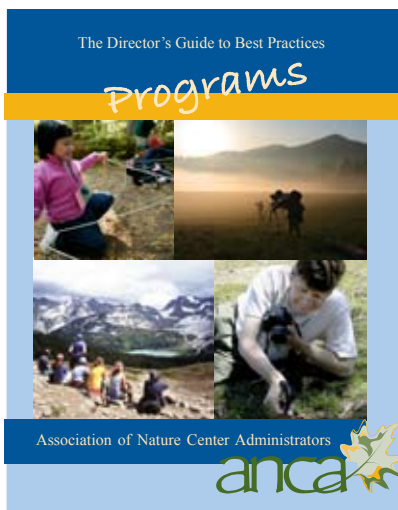
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To find out more about ANCA's Peer Consults contact:

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