



Preserving Fall



Me: “Have you noticed that there are a lot of fallen leaves on the ground lately? They come in all sorts of colors and shapes and carry the smell of fall! Today we are going to use these leaves to preserve fall and turn them into pieces that can last forever.”

I showed a variety of materials: cards, ribbons, scissors, glue, sticks, etc. “Everyone can preserve fall leaves in a different way by painting, cutting, and pasting, combining them; feel free to do what you want! We’re not just doing crafts; we’re also exploring the mysteries of plants.”

The children then all went in search of their favorite leaves and materials and began to get into their creations.







Wren chose to trace the shape of a leaf with a pencil.

Me: “Wren, you’re tracing the outline of a leaf!”

Wren: “Yes, but its outline is hard to draw.”

Me: “What do you think is special about its outline?”

Wren: “It has jagged edges, much like a wave.”

Me: “Exactly! Different leaves have different-shaped edges. Why did you choose to preserve the leaf this way?”

Wren: “I feel like I can see the edges of the leaves more clearly this way, so that the lines are drawn like the actual shape of the leaves.”

Me: “I can feel that the edges of it are making it hard for you to draw; maybe you could try to draw a rough outline and then add the details of the edges.”

Wren: “Yeah! I’ll try that.”

Me: “Do you notice any other variations in the leaves that you could draw?”

Wren didn’t find any other variations. So I fingered the color changes in the leaves to give her a hint.

Wren: “The leaves change color in the fall; I can try coloring them with different colored pencils.”





Emily placed the leaves under the paper and lightly copied the texture of the leaves with a pencil.

Me: “You’re preserving the leaves the same way we did last time!”

Emily: “I think this is the best way to preserve the leaves! I can see these leaf veins very clearly!”

Me: “Emily, what textures did you notice in the leaves?”

She surprised me by saying, “Look, as I’m drawing, the leaf veins stretch out like little rivers!”

Me: “Yes, and the nutrients that the tree gets are transported to the leaves through these leaf veins like a small flowing river.”

Emily: “That’s how the leaves grow bigger and better looking; I copy the leaves, and the leaves are preserved in their fullest form for me forever!”

Emily glued the leaves onto a new piece of paper after she finished copying them. “I still want to save some real leaves.”

Me: “It’s a real trace that proves fall came. If you want to make a small thing out of these traces, I’ve prepared a lot of materials, so feel free to play around.”

Emily: “I glued the leaves to the paper, and I have a leaf painting! But I want to hang it up.”

Me: “I can punch a hole for you and put on a string or a plush stick.”

Emily: “I want the fuzzy stick, but I think it would look better hanging it by cutting off the extra paper and leaving just the leaves.”







Jasper chose to cut up leaves and glue their pieces into a picture.
Me: “You are cutting up leaves and then gluing them to paper to create a very special effect! Do you think there’s anything special about preserving the leaves this way?”

Jasper: “The leaves will look more like a painting, and I can create new patterns on my own.”

Me: “That’s so creative! You could also try matching different colors of leaves and see if the effect would be richer!”

Jasper: “Yeah, I can add some more yellow leaves in.”

Me: “The splintered leaves put together into new shapes, and they look a lot like fall leaves, too.”

Jasper: “It looks like the ground in the fall with lots of fallen leaves.”

Me: “Yeah, the ground is very colorful in the fall and the green leaves change colors.”

Jasper: “I picked up all the different colored leaves; these are the colors that represent fall!”

Me: “Fall is on your paper now.”





Mackena glued a large leaf onto the paper, and after she saw Jasper cut up the leaf and glued it onto the paper, she pulled out some broken leaves with her hands and glued them onto the paper as well.

Me: “Are there any other materials that you think you could also add to enrich this picture?”

Mackena then went and picked up some more rocks and glued them to the paper.

Me: “Mackena, I see that you added rocks. Why did you think of putting them together?”

Mackena: “There are not only leaves on the ground in the fall; there are also lots of little rocks.”

Me: “You are very observant, and they are beautiful together. And the rocks make your work look more layered.”

Dialogue continued
on next page





Mackena: "I always see lots of rocks around plants."

Emily: "I also see that some plants can grow between the rocks!"

Wren: "How does that grow?"

Nova: "They probably fall in and grow slowly, right?"

Mackena: "Did they crawl through the dirt?"

Me: "Nova's guess is close; the plant's seeds fell into the cracks in the rocks. The wind can blow the seeds anywhere, and some of the birds ate the plant's seeds, and they could have stayed on top of the rock, and the seeds could have been carried into the crack."

Wren: "But the crack between the rocks is small and too crowded."

Me: "Plant roots are actually very powerful and can burrow into very small crevices. Do you guys remember what roots do in particular?"

Jasper: "Roots can absorb nutrients!"

Emily: "Roots allow the plant to hold onto the soil so the plant doesn't run away."

Continued from
previous page



Me: "That's right! Not only do roots absorb nutrients, but they also allow the plant to expand slowly. Sometimes the roots will widen the gap in the rock little by little so the plant has more room to grow."

Mackena raised her hand in the air. "Is it like that?"

I raised my hand as well and stretched upward, "Yes, just like we push hard to open a very tight door, the roots of a plant struggle to find a place where they can take root. They keep pushing and stretching and eventually find a small space where they can grow."

The children raised their hands together to imitate.

Jasper shook his head. "That sounds so hard."

I nodded, "Yes, plants in nature can adapt to their environments and try to grow even when conditions are bad. That's why we see them growing in all kinds of places, like in rocks, in the desert, and even on walls."

Nova: "Plants are powerful!"





Nova found a very large, whole, beautiful leaf.

Nova was excited to show me, “I found the most beautiful leaf, and it’s not broken yet.” “Look at the veins; Emily said they look like creeks!”

The leaf was bigger than the paper; Nova cut off the stalk, then glued the leaf to the paper. Nova then took a small wooden stick and glued it to the paper to mimic the stalk of a leaf.

I praised her for her ingenuity and asked, “Nova, you used the stick instead of a leaf stalk and turned it into a leaf painting that you can hold. This is an awesome idea! Can you think of what tree this leaf fell from?”

Nova looked at the shape of the leaf and replied, “I know it’s a maple tree!”

I nodded my head and said, “The maple leaf is special in the fall. You have found a new form of life for it, and you now have a leaf painting to hold!”

Nova: “I think it looks a lot like a fan, a fan of leaves in the fall! I’m going to show it to everyone!”

Emily: “I like that, Nova, and I want to try this too. Can you teach me?”

Nova hands Emily a stick, and she sees the leaf stamping Emily copied earlier and says, “Sure! You can glue the stick to this drawing.”

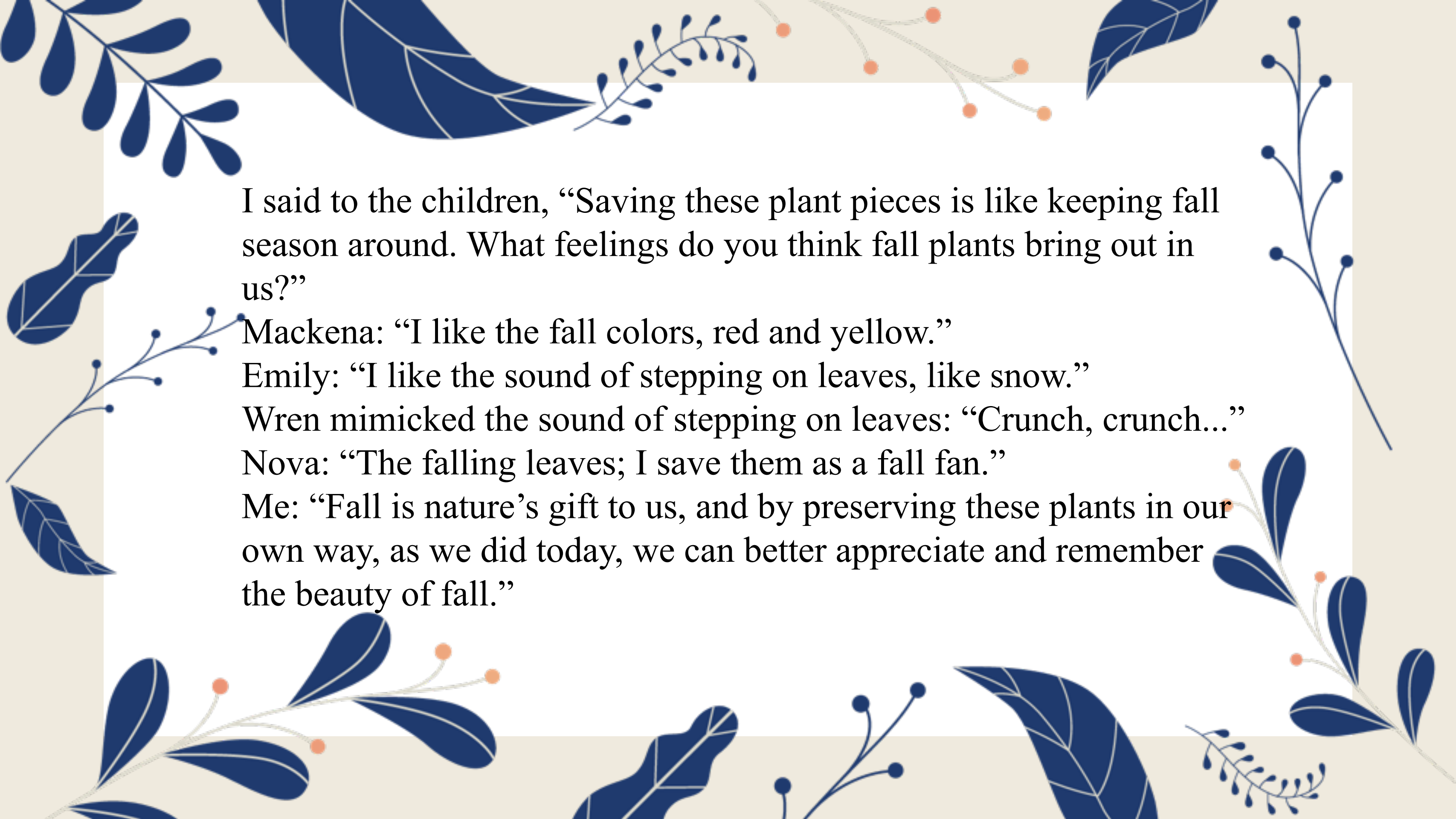
Emily: “It does look like a leaf stalk.”

Me: “The simulated leaf stalk with the stick goes well with your printmaking.”

Emily: “Now I have a fall fan too.”







I said to the children, “Saving these plant pieces is like keeping fall season around. What feelings do you think fall plants bring out in us?”

Mackena: “I like the fall colors, red and yellow.”

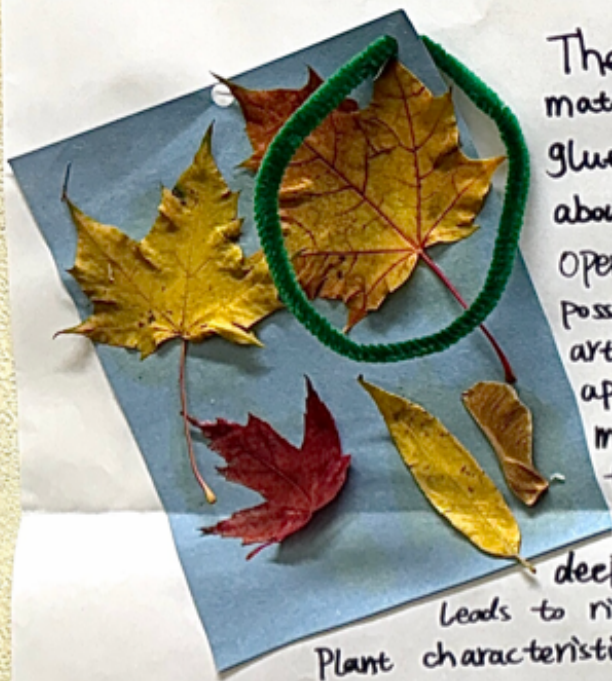
Emily: “I like the sound of stepping on leaves, like snow.”

Wren mimicked the sound of stepping on leaves: “Crunch, crunch...”

Nova: “The falling leaves; I save them as a fall fan.”

Me: “Fall is nature’s gift to us, and by preserving these plants in our own way, as we did today, we can better appreciate and remember the beauty of fall.”

Preserving Fall Leaves



The teacher prepared some open-ended materials, like card papers, ribbons, scissors, glue etc. to support the children's ideas about different ways to preserve fall's plants. Open-ended materials offered a wide range of possibilities to help them explore different forms of artistic expression. Each child found the most appropriate way of preservation by exploring multiple materials. Children were guided to paid closer attention to the shapes, colors and textures of the plants, which deepens their knowledge of nature and leads to richer observations and understandings of plant characteristics and the fall season.

Preserving plants is a way of remembering and cherishing the season, children were guided to develop an emotional connection to fall, appreciate and respect nature, and cultivate a caring heart for nature.

This activity also provided an opportunities for communication and sharing. Children discussed their creativity and ideas with their peers, accepted different points of view in the process of sharing, enhanced peer relationships and improved their sense of cooperation and communication skills.



Emily placed the leaves under the paper to copy the texture of the leaves, just like she did last time.
"I think this way retains the leaves the clearest."
"I can see the leaf veins by this way."



She glued the leaves to the paper and cut out the excess.



She glued the stick to the leaf - textured paper.
"I made a leaf fan!"
"And leaf bracelet!"
"I can hang it anywhere."



Children are making their own unique leaf preservation creations.



When traced the outline of the leaves in pencil.
"The curved shape of the leaves is hard to draw."
"I feel like I can see the edges of the leaves more clearly this way, so that the lines are drawn like the real shape of the leaves."



"Some jagged texture on the edges of the leaves."



Teacher: "You're cutting up the leaves and gluing them to the paper for a very special effect! Do you think there's something special about preserving leaves this way?"
Jasper: "It makes the leaves look more like a painting."
"I can create new patterns with leaves."



Teacher: "I see you used not only leaves, but stones as well. Why did you think of combining them together?"
Mackenna: "Rocks are match to the leaves."
Teacher: "Elements from nature become rich and vivid in your work!"



"I also cut some leaves and glue them on the paper."



"This leaf is very beautiful and not broken."
"These leaf veins seem like many small rivers on the leaves."



Teacher: "What a clever thing to do! This stick looks like a stalk of leaves, it can be used as a decoration too!"
Nova: "I can walk around with this unique fall fan for everyone to see!"



"It holds like a fan and the leaves are too big to stick on the paper."



What It Means

Through this activity, the children were able to develop richly in various aspects such as nature observation, hand-eye coordination, social interaction, language expression, logical thinking, and emotional experience. This kind of activity not only promoted their understanding of plant knowledge but also helped them to come into deeper contact with and experience nature, expressed their understanding of nature through creativity, and built up a positive attitude towards exploring and loving nature.



◆ Development of Observation and Understanding of Nature Knowledge

-Detailed observation and description: During the activity, each child observed the texture, color, and shape of leaves through direct touching, tracing, and coping, etc. Wren discovered jagged veins by looking at the edges of the leaves; Emily observed that the veins of the leaves were shaped like small rivers. Such observational experiences helped them gain a deeper understanding of the structural details of plants, such as leaf veins, edges, and color variations, while strengthening their attention and nature observation skills.

-Extension of Nature Knowledge: I guided the children through the role of leaf veins and the adaptations of plants to the environment in which they grow. When discussing how plants grow in rock crevices, I used vivid analogies (e.g., “A plant root is like pushing open a very tight door”) to help children understand the adaptability and vitality of plants so that they can have a more intuitive understanding of the process of plant growth.





◆ Development of Creativity and Individual Expression

Before the activity, I purposely prepared some open-ended materials, as this provides a wide range of possibilities to help them explore different forms of artistic expression. Each child will find the most suitable method of preservation by exploring a wide range of materials. At the same time, the children need to make choices in their creations (e.g., which plants to choose and how to preserve them), which will also help them to develop problem-solving skills and improve their decision-making abilities.

-Individualized artistic expression: During the activity, children preserved leaves in different ways, reflecting their individuality and creativity. For example, Wren traced lines to express the shape of the edges of the leaves, Emily copied a leaf to show the textural details of the leaf veins, and Nova used sticks to make an “autumn fan” that she could hold in her hand. These diverse creations not only enhanced their creativity but also encouraged them to express their understanding of fall and nature in unique ways.

-Innovation and exploration: The children continued to explore new methods and combinations of materials in their creations. Jasper chose to cut up leaves for his collage, while Mackena added stones to enrich the layers of her work after observing Jasper’s collage creation. Such exploration promoted the development of their creative thinking and made them more willing to experiment with different materials and forms in their creations.





◆ Hand-Eye Coordination and Fine Motor Development

During the activities, children trained their hand-eye coordination and fine motor development through cutting, sticking, and painting. For example, Emily needed to control the strength of the pencil to clearly show the veins of the leaves when she was stamping; Jasper needed to accurately control the movement of his fingers to adjust the position of the pieces when he was cutting up the leaves for pasting. These hands-on practices helped them develop fine motor and hand-eye coordination skills and exercised concentration and hands-on skills through creative activities.





◆ **Development of Social Interaction and Thinking and Expression Skills**

-Sharing and collaboration: During the activity, children took the initiative to observe and learn from each other's creative methods. For example, when Mackena saw Jasper cutting up leaves and sticking them on paper, she also tried to tear up some leaves by hand to make a painting of dead leaves; Emily was also inspired by Nova's use of sticks as leaf handles to add a sense of vividness to her work. This process of learning and sharing with each other promoted their social interactions and enabled them to develop a sense of cooperation while respecting the creativity of others.

-Discussion and expression: Throughout the activity, children developed their language descriptive and metaphorical skills by describing the details of the leaves they observed and sharing their creative ideas. In addition, the children discussed the process of plant growth and adaptation under my guidance. Through these discussions, the children not only practiced their expression skills but also stimulated deeper thinking among their peers. For example, when discussing the growth of plants in rock crevices, children offered their own speculations and inspired each other to further enrich their understanding of the environment in which plants grow.





◆ Emotional development and love of nature

-Emotional empathy and nature care: preserving plants is a way of remembering and cherishing the season. During the activity, I guided children to appreciate the beauty of autumn plants by answering children's as well as open-ended questions to help them develop emotional resonance with nature. By preserving autumn leaves with their hearts and minds, children show their love and appreciation for nature and gradually develop a sense of love for and protection of nature. This emotional resonance strengthens their connection with nature and makes them better able to remember the seasonal characteristics of autumn.

-Sense of accomplishment and self-confidence: During the activity, each child completed an "autumn work" through his or her own creation, and experienced the sense of accomplishment of hands-on creation. My encouragement and affirmation further strengthened their self-confidence and made them feel proud and motivated when participating in the activity.

