

# Bush Kinder – Growth and potential

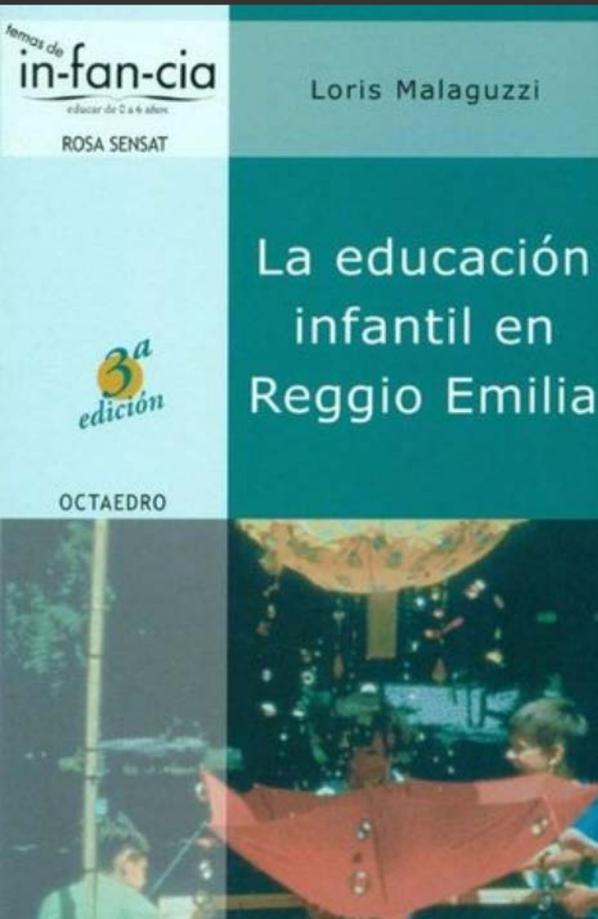


I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which I live, work and learn

# Over 50 years of success Forest Schools in Northern Europe

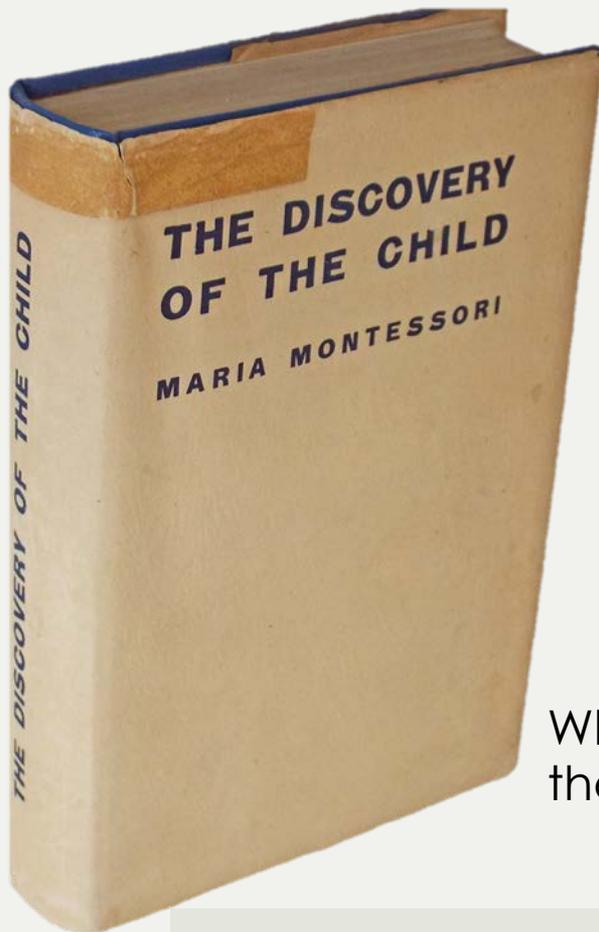


# Over 50 years of Loris Malaguzzi's influence on education



The environment as teacher

# Over 100 years of Montessori Schools



When children are placed in natural surroundings, then there is the revelation of their strength.

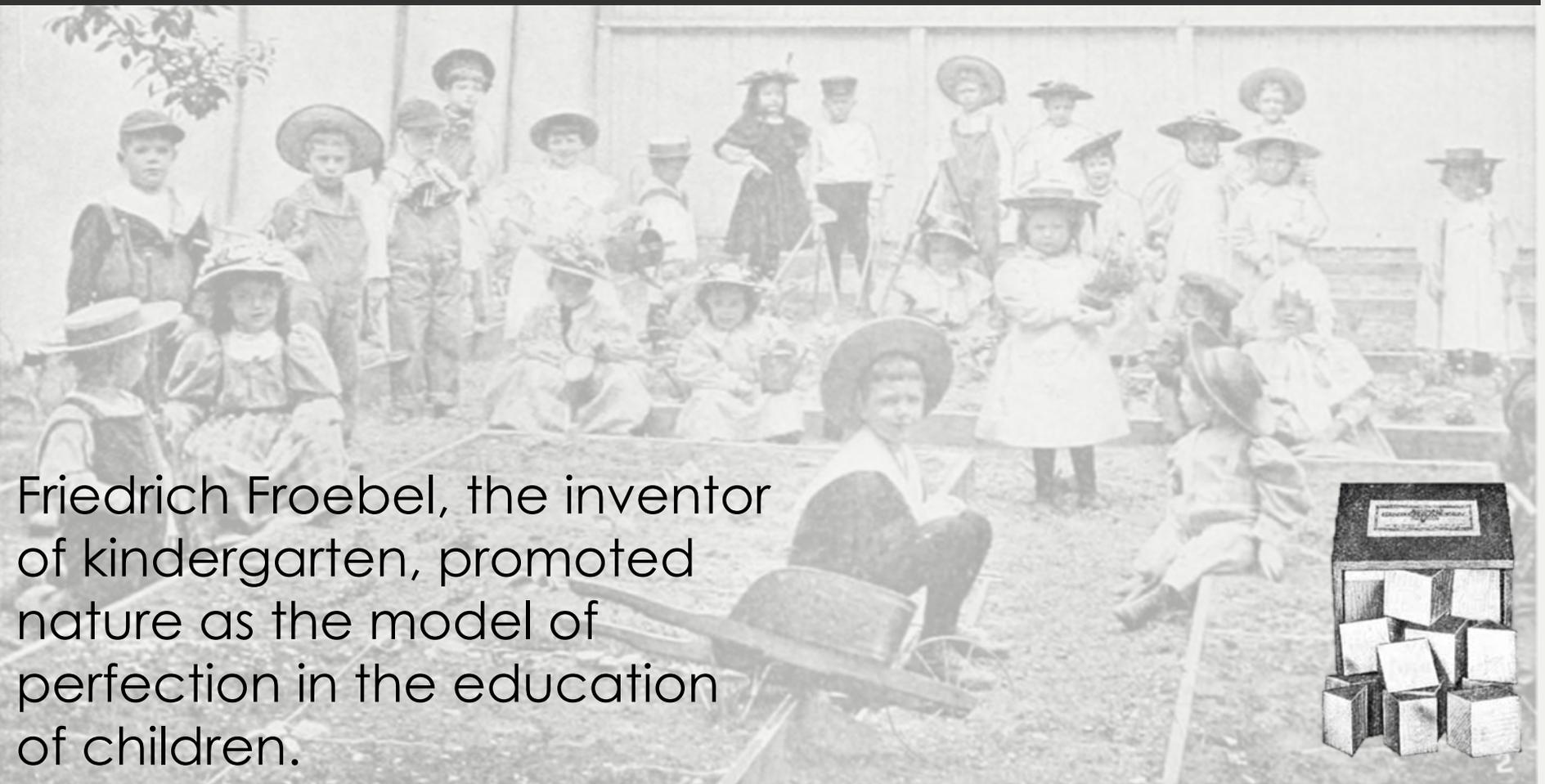
# 100 years of Waldorf education



Rudolf Steiner drew on spiritual and natural worlds. Steiner schools are often recognised for their use of natural materials.



# 180 years of kindergarten



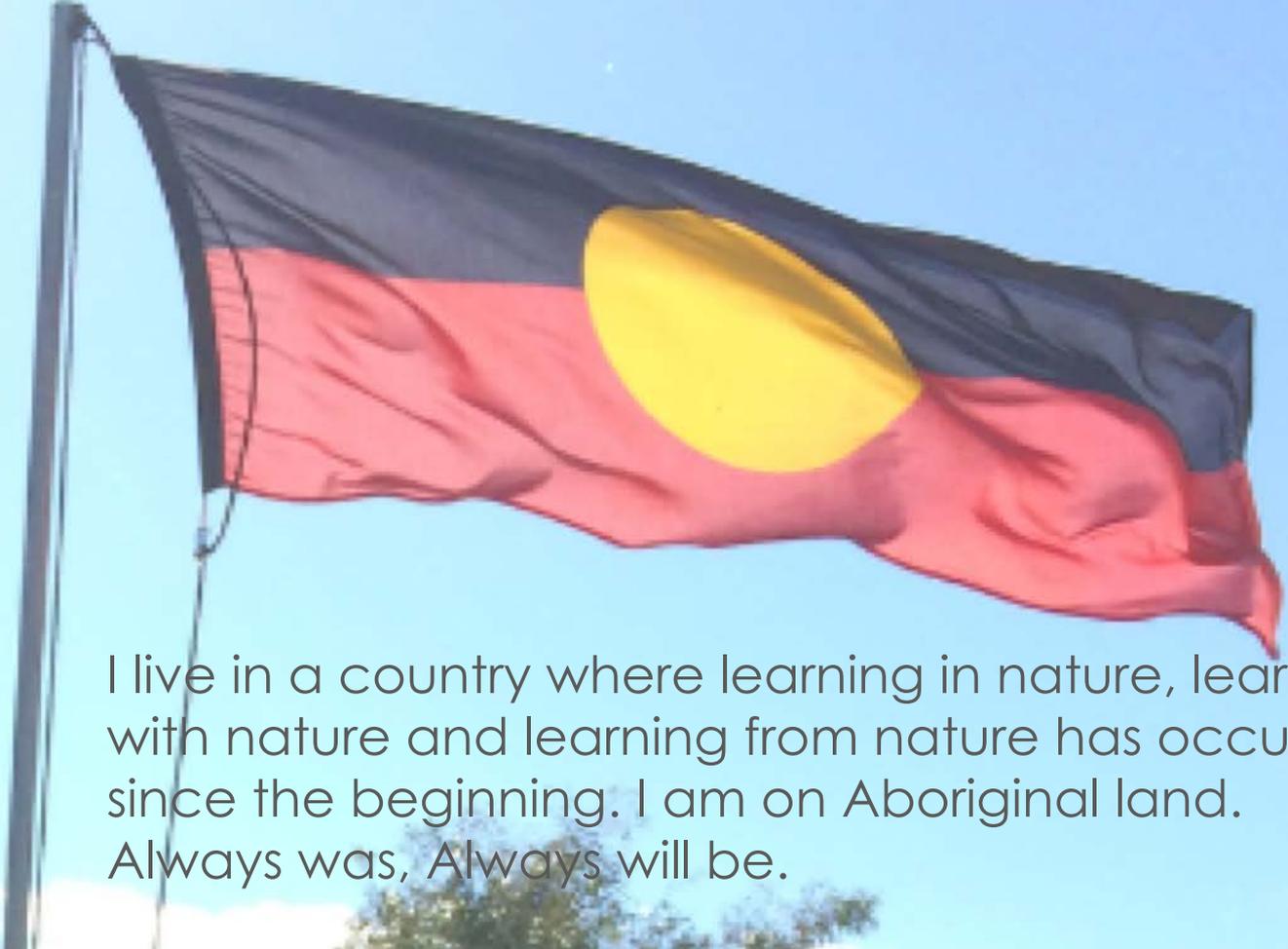
Friedrich Froebel, the inventor of kindergarten, promoted nature as the model of perfection in the education of children.

# In Australia Over 60,000 years of teaching with and learning from the land



Connection to Country

Always was, Always will be

The image shows the Australian Aboriginal flag, which consists of a black upper half and a red lower half, with a yellow circle in the center. The flag is flying on a black pole against a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

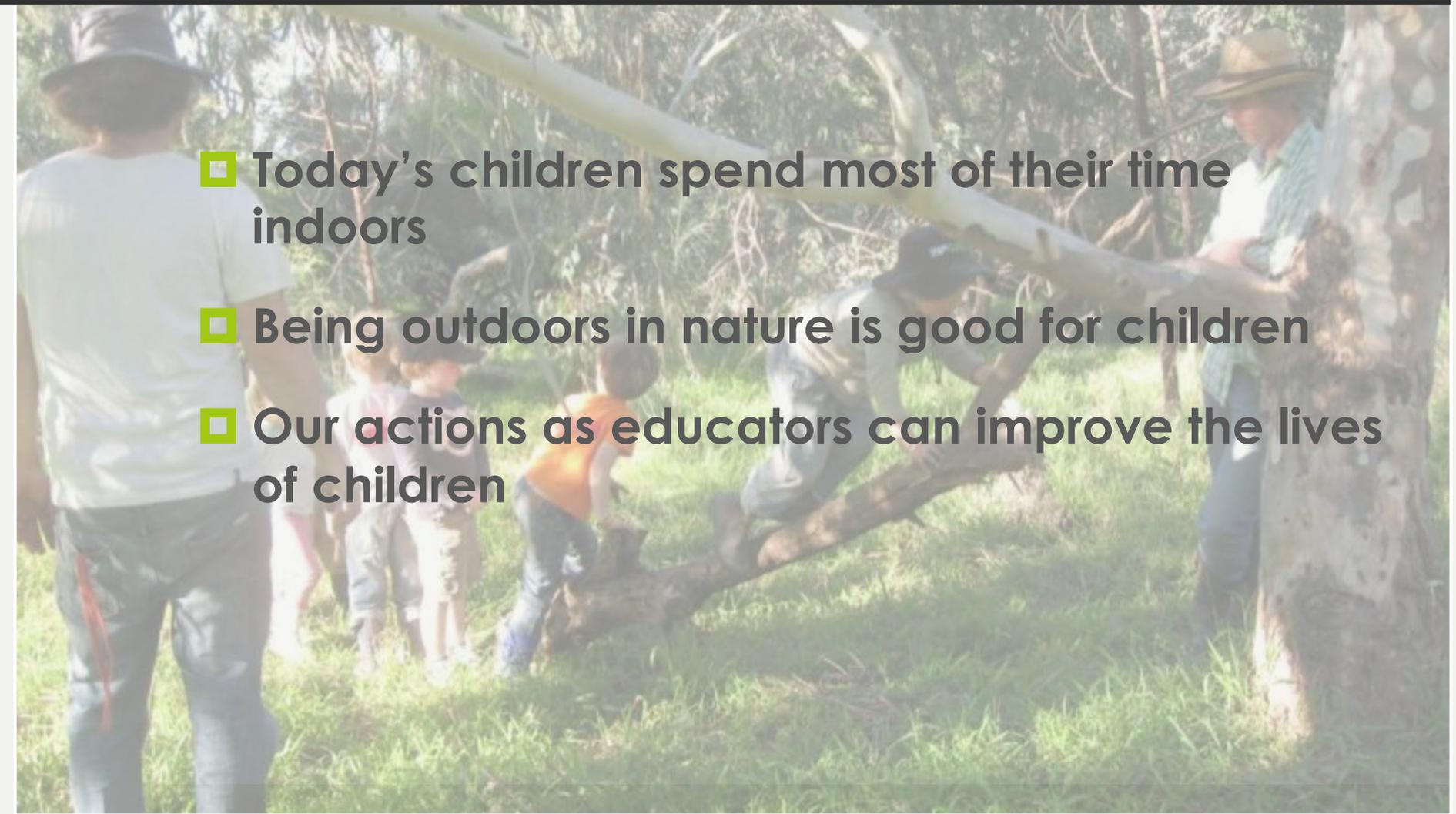
I live in a country where learning in nature, learning with nature and learning from nature has occurred since the beginning. I am on Aboriginal land. Always was, Always will be.

Childhood is precious



# 3 Truths

- ❑ Today's children spend most of their time indoors
- ❑ Being outdoors in nature is good for children
- ❑ Our actions as educators can improve the lives of children



## First truth

Today's children spend most of their time indoors

- 1 in 4 Australian children have NEVER climbed a tree.
- Only 1 in 5 children explore the outdoors as a regular part of their play
- For every hour of outdoor leisure time we spend around 7 hours in front of screens



# Second truth

## Being outdoors is good for children

- ▣ Children who spend more time outdoors in nature are happier, healthier, stronger, smarter, kinder and more social.

Summary of White, R 2004 Young Children's Relationship with Nature





Positive outcomes in the following areas:  
physical health, cognitive functioning and  
self-control, psychological well-being,  
imaginative play,  
and an affiliation with other species and the  
natural world

Literature review Chawla, L., (2015). Benefits of nature contact for children. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 30(4), 433-452.

Education is humanity's best hope and most effective means in the quest to achieve sustainable development.

UNESCO report 1997 Educating for a Sustainable Future



# Less Stressed

Even a view of nature — green plants and vistas — helps reduce stress among highly stressed children. Further, the more plants, green views and access to natural play areas, the more positive the results.

Wells, N.M., and Evans, G.W.



# Improved Cognition

- Exposure to natural environments improves children's cognitive development by improving their awareness, reasoning and observational skills (Pyle 2002)



# Healthier & Advanced motor fitness

- ▣ Children who play regularly in natural environments show more advanced motor fitness, including coordination, balance and agility, and they are sick less often

Fjortoft 2001, Grahn 1997



# Social Benefit

- Natural environments stimulate social interaction between children.

Moore 1986, Bixler, Floyd & Hammutt 2002

- Children who play in nature have more positive feelings about each other.

Moore 1996



# Social Benefit





▣ **“The Westgarth Bush Kinder Pilot Project has exceeded all expectations. Children, teachers, parents and community have evolved with the program...Bush Kinder has positively challenged and extended them”**

[Elliott S & Chancellor B 2012, Westgarth Kindergarten Bush Kinder Evaluation Report]

“Great to see risks managed effectively not removed so that children can effectively learn”

Belinda Sims DET Victoria



# Education and Care Services National Regulations

## **113 Outdoor space—natural environment**

The approved provider of a centre-based service must ensure that the outdoor spaces provided at the education and care service premises allow children to explore and experience the natural environment.

### **Example**

The use of natural features such as trees, sand and natural vegetation.

### **Note**

A compliance direction may be issued for failure to comply with this regulation.

## DET Bush Kinder Fact Sheet

- The development of bush kinders reflects the mounting body of evidence that outdoor activities such as exploring natural environments, are beneficial to children and contribute to improving children's health and wellbeing.



# Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Network

Advocacy  
Gatherings  
Training  
Conferences

A volunteer organisation  
'practioners sharing with other practioners'

ECOLearning Network Conference 2019

***Pedagogy &  
Practice in  
Nature  
Education***

SHAWN ANDREWS  
Dr JAYSON COOPER  
Dr SUE ELLIOTT

APRIL 26th and 27th  
Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria  
Melbourne Gardens

Tickets and further info:  
[www.trybooking.com/BADHI](http://www.trybooking.com/BADHI)  
[ecolearningnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:ecolearningnetwork@gmail.com)

Presented with support of the Royal Botanic Gardens  
Victoria



There is a strong indication that the movement is growing rapidly. Over 300 groups in Victoria Almost 30% of programs have only been running for a year or less



# Other groups and people

- Queer bush playgroups
- Natural Parenting groups
- Parents who Home School
- Men
- Older community members

# Access and Diversity

- **67%** of programs are being accessed by children from **culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds**
- **66%** of programs are being accessed by by children with **disabilities**
- **56%** engaging with children from **disadvantaged backgrounds**
- Almost half of all programs (**45%**) were accessed by **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children**

**Nature play, bush kinder and outdoor learning survey 2016**

# Future investment

- Invest in those networks and individuals who are already demonstrating success.
- Invest in online material
- Create and maintain more wild spaces for children to access.
- Provide grants for programs wishing to start up
- Support further research
- Invest in nature pedagogy in schools, not just early years.

# Into the school ground





Together with nature we can improve the lives of children and make this world a better place.

