

Free and low-cost outdoor entertainment for kids

By VIRGINIA JUSTICE

Last month, we listed some DIY playthings for kids – now let's take that concept outside!

One of my personal favorites for summer fun uses a garden hose and plastic lawn chairs. The best hose is one they used to call a soaker hose, which sprays a fine mist along its length. If you don't have one, just take an old hose and use an ice pick or other sharp implement to poke holes in it. Then weave the hose through the lawn chairs or attach it with duct tape, so the water sprays under the chairs. The result is a "tunnel" of water that children can crawl through on a hot day. I put down a sheet of plastic to save the grass –and if you add a little dish soap or baby shampoo the plastic becomes a slip and slide. You can also create a "People Wash" using PVC piping that you drill holes in then make tunnel out of them. For a visual explanation, search YouTube for "Homemade Water Park." Using PVC pipe makes the People Wash easy to take apart and store away for later, without taking up much space. Pinterest has other great ideas for creating your own personal water park.

For your artistic kids, water and paintbrushes can keep children entertained and cool by having them "paint" on the cement. Sponges make awesome paintbrushes; you can even get compressed sponge

sheets that you can cut into shapes. I found them at JoAnn Fabric, but I know they are available on Amazon in larger sheets. These sheets are flat but expand when placed in

dollar store in the BBQ section) and squirt the paint, but make sure you tell children to avoid their faces.

There are plenty of items you can create with household ingredi-



water, and can be used many times before they wear out.

Another fun, outside-only activity is filling balloons with washable paint (see last month's EO Parent for a bath paint recipe). Children can "paint" the sidewalk or lay down white paper for their creations. Children can either toss, use a hammer to splat or use a tool like a screwdriver to pop the balloons. Messy, yes, but no one said life had to be tidy all the time – and with bath paint you simply hose the children down. You can put washable paint into condiment squeeze bottles (usually available at the

ents. For instance, bubbles are easy to make. There are many bubble recipes on the web – here's mine: Start with 2.5 cups water, ½ cup light corn syrup, and ½ cup dish soap. To create the bubbles; in small saucepan over medium heat mix water and corn syrup until hot, slowly stir in dish soap until blended, allow to cool.

You can create bubble wands out of pipe cleaners, cookie cutters, straws, toilet paper tubes or just about anything that is hollow in the center. You could create a multiple bubble maker by poking holes in a disposable pie pan, dipping it in



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the bubble and waving it in the air. Check your kitchen for items that would be fun with bubbles, for instance a potato masher or slotted spoon. Use food coloring to color your bubbles, and blow colored bubbles onto white paper to create bubble art.

I heard that you can make gigantic, durable bubbles using KY Jelly or surgical lubricant, and after a bit of research and I found a recipe that seems to work well. Combine 12 ounces water, 1 ounce of dish soap, and ½ ounce of the lubricant in a container with a lid and shake to mix. You will need to wait until

the next day to use this bubble concoction, as it needs some resting time to be effective.

Outdoor fun does not have to be expensive and in many cases it can provide teaching moments that involve children in learning and experimenting. Here is hoping you have an exciting, possibly messy summer – and remember that children, like clothing, are meant to be washed regularly.

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