



# Kite and Leaf...

The good news  
email from TCS!

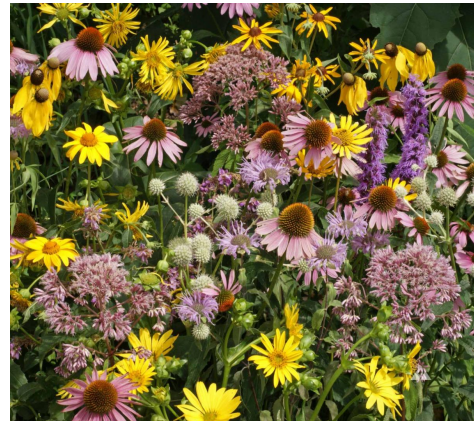
## Spring, Gardens, and Our Outdoor Spaces

As spring arrives, our thoughts are turning to our green and outdoor spaces here at TCS, especially since we're spending more time outside for both classwork and play. In this edition Lea Schweitz, our outdoor and nature-play consultant, walks us through exciting summer plans for these spaces:

### **Pocket Prairie Plans!**

We're bringing the prairie back to Oak Park Avenue with plans for a "pocket prairie" on what is now the lawn in front of the newer building.

The pocket prairie will include native grasses and wildflowers that are good for birds and pollinators (and of course people!).



Our plans received support from [West Cook Wild Ones](#) with a small grant for plants, mentoring, and landscape design with a team of master gardeners and naturalists.

The space will include a paved path, "sit spots", and signage to help both the TCS community and our Oak Park neighbors understand how the prairie grows - because prairies take a couple years to see in their fullest beauty!

**Playing by Pine Trees and a**





## 'Pizza Patch'?

The greenspace corner of Oak Park Ave. and Pleasant St. has been a new favorite home for Ms. Nadine, Ms. Kendra and their Kindergarten class. Students have laughed and learned here all year - with a full-on pine tree forest created with donated holiday trees!

The space also features our raised bed garden that grows edible vegetables. This spring/summer/fall our students will be able to again care for and help harvest yummy veggies like leafy greens, sensory plants that smell wonderful (think mint and lemon balm), marigolds to bring in that TCS orange, and a 'pizza patch' with tomatoes and basil.

We continue to explore ways to bring more native plants in containers to that space and to find creative ways to play with the fencing (i.e. more mobiles and wind catchers!)

## Riverside Refresh

We are still learning to listen to the lessons we've learned from spending so much time in our outdoor space this year. Our definite plans include power-washing the surfaces, repainting the river, and refreshing our building materials throughout the "riverside" (the lower portion of the outdoor space). Other goals include enhancing the resting corner with new seating options (possibly a donated porch swing??), adding more plants, fluffing the wood chips (and adding new ones), capturing more rainwater, and painting murals.



In the bluff (the upper portion), we plan to deep clean the entire space, bring back the water sluice pump, add additional water play and exploration space, refresh the mud kitchen with better storage, restore the playhouse, update sand play materials, add storage for a nature art corner and





possibly some musical instruments! We are also looking for ways to bring in more quiet sit spots and plants!

In other news, we hope to finalize the process to have TCS's versatile outdoor space certified as a [Nature Explore outdoor classroom](#) by the late spring/early summer.



### **Volunteers Needed: We Welcome Both Green Thumbs and All-Thumbs!**

At every stage, there are opportunities for TCS families to donate time, talent, or materials to help improve our outdoor spaces.

For instance, we are always happy to receive loose parts for nature play (pinecones, river rocks, tree cookies), water pails and watering cans. Soon we will need a new team of water champions and sand superstars to help with watering and regular maintenance of our spaces over the summer.

In addition, we're looking for recommendations for help adding murals, creating signs, restoring the playhouse, and building arbor entrances (just a couple of examples).

If you and/or your family would like to donate items or volunteer to help clean, maintain, and improve our outdoor space, please email [admin@thechildrensschool.info](mailto:admin@thechildrensschool.info).

