

THE COTTAGE GARDEN

PARENT HANDBOOK



Dear Parents,

We would like to warmly welcome you all to our home and our Waldorf Early Childhood Program. Our Handbook is revised annually, so we hope those of you with copies from previous years will all take time to read it through again. There is a Table of Contents to help you find topics easily.

Inside, you will find what inspires and motivates us in offering this program to you and your children. You will find the ethical and the practical and the wonderfully enjoyable parts of it all. We feel honored to be engaged in this work and to offer your children days filled with intention, grace, joy, respect, song, story, nutritious food and most of all, love.

We are looking forward to another wonderful year with all of you.

With many blessings,

Celia & Barbara

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OUR PHILOSOPHY

Waldorf Education – Waldorf Education stems from the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, called Anthroposophy, which holds that there is spiritual wisdom living within each human being, and that this wisdom is intrinsically connected to a spiritual wisdom living within the entire created world and the universe beyond it. He taught a path of individual development, linking our human world to the worlds of nature and of spirit. He primarily taught this through the professions, to people who came to him with questions about how to make their work more meaningful for themselves as well as for others. Out of his offering, a spiritual-human path began to be developed for farmers, doctors, priests, artists, educators and others.

This philosophy, as well as the work developed by others over the past century, guides all of our endeavors. It lives in all that we do with and for the children—from the room set-up and the materials provided for their play, to the food we eat, the stories and songs we choose and how we carry ourselves in front of them. They are imitative beings, and we feel that we must be and do what is worthy of imitation.

Waldorf education can first be understood by observing the developmental stages in the life of human beings. The first stage is from pre-birth to age seven, and this is the stage with which we primarily work. We believe that children come from the spiritual world to the Earth with an individual purpose, an individual gift to be developed and offered to the world. We believe they choose you, their parents—biologically, or otherwise—to help them begin to learn their life lessons. They arrive unfinished. Just as they, in-utero, are developing their organs and bodies, so they continue in another particular kind of development until the age of seven. Essential to this developmental stage are the senses. Children begin to take what they meet in the outer world into themselves through their senses, and, as taught by Steiner, we have twelve. In early childhood education, we work more strongly with four of them: touch, life, balance and movement. Children need to be protected and given the opportunity to have life experiences they can make “sense” of.

We would like to share some examples of what we mean by these four senses, how they work together and how we try to offer the children a healthy experience of them.

- Touch – Why do children touch everything, not only with their hands, but also with their mouths, their eyes, their feet, and sometimes by rolling around on things with their whole bodies? They do this because it is how they discover where they are: where they end and the other or the world begins. We primarily offer them toys made from natural materials, handmade with love and intention. Their bedding is made of organic cotton sheets and down blankets. When they touch something here at The Cottage Garden it holds a truth in it, it is real, genuine, and that helps the children come to know the living world around them. It helps them incarnate into their bodies in a balanced way.
- Life – this is a mysterious sense. We really only get an inkling of this it when we do not feel well, when our sense of life is "off." We try to provide a place where the children's burgeoning sense of life is supported and fed. We keep them warm; we feed them simple, nutritious, organic food; we sing and tell them stories; we hold a rhythm of outer activity and inward quiet that pulses through our days. All of these things support a healthy sense of life. Toilet training becomes easier when their sense of life is in balance.
- Balance – We all wish to be in balance, to have balance in our lives. With the young child we try to provide lots of physical experiences of finding balance because as they find it on the rocker boards, or in jumping off the logs; their growing sense of it gets integrated into their bodies and supports them. They are then confident enough to climb a tree or jump off of a step or a log. When the intense growth and physical activity of early childhood tapers off, their physical achievements will have educated them to pursue achieving other capacities. They will more sturdily, more confidently begin then to perform the balancing acts of their souls. Along with these activities, the social skills of sharing, of waiting their turn, also help the children towards this end. Learning modulation in their eating and their

speaking as well, works upon the development of this sense, as well as on the following one.

- Movement – Children need to have lots of self-motivated, free movement time, using their little limbs without interference or adult direction. This occurs in their outdoor play through activities such as climbing, running, jumping and rolling. In their indoor play, they work at developing a different aspect of movement. Through the smaller movements of picking up and carrying objects, their small motor skills are being developed for future writing, artistic and work-related skills. Learning to negotiate their direction in crawling and walking towards the things they want to play with, the people they love, in the space they share with others, they discover where they are in space, their own body geography.

Creative Free Play – One of the premises of The Cottage Garden is that self-motivated, children's play is the most important part of their morning; it is their work and the way that they learn about life and its many wonders and struggles. In a way, it would be easier to have activities planned for every moment of the morning. The children would always be occupied with a teacher-directed activity and many more artistic items would come home. We do not feel, however, that this would be in the children's best interest. They need to be left free to take in the world through their four developing senses. They need to play so that they can learn about socializing, sharing, taking risks, role modeling for each other and resolving conflict. These are all worked out and explored during free play. We are, of course, there to help them navigate this territory, mainly by offering them re-direction and a helpful imagination in which to engage. Children from birth to three need space and time. We are offering slow childcare at The Cottage Garden. While one adult may be sitting in the midst of the children, they are left to move freely about the room, explore all the toys and discover each other.

Rhythm – Our time together has a rhythm all its own. There is a daily, weekly, and yearly rhythm, with seasonal festivals and birthday celebrations being woven in. Young children do not have the same sense of time that we do as adults, so any activity that can be done in a slower and more rhythmical way

will be helpful for them. They will develop a confidence in themselves and in the world through knowing what to expect. When the outer structure is secure and strong for them, they are left free to play, explore and learn about the world. Every day will have repetitive rhythms that the children will get to know, with transitions between activities guided by songs such as the grace we sing before our meals, our tidy-up song, our washing hands song and so on. Life is full of natural rhythms—polarities, if you like—such as breathing, day and night and the progression of the seasons. Because young children live more closely with natural rhythms, they are very comforted by the simple rhythmical activities we create for them.

Imagination – It is our role as the children's teachers to help facilitate their play and to provide them with imaginative, living pictures. For example, the pistils in a flower may be referred to as the prince and princess in their castle, or the falling snow may be referred to as the angels shaking their quilts. As they grow older, this ability to imagine evolves into the capacity to think creatively—to see creative life at play within the visible structure of the world and to know themselves as a part of this life.

Discipline Policy - At The Cottage Garden, we take many measures to prevent behavioral problems. Our goal is to support the development of self-discipline and self-care within each child and also, to help them develop social skills, particularly, empathy. It is not helpful to require them to "be nice;" they must also be given the opportunity to understand the feelings, thoughts and intentions of others as well as their own. Our own ongoing professional study and inner work, as well as our own developing self-discipline and empathy, bring us an understanding of childhood development and realistic expectations for the children. We strive to model ideal behavior through our interactions between each other as teachers and people, with the children, and with you as their parents. We will always share any specific incidents we have witnessed or any general concerns we have about your child with you. As well, we hope you will share with us any event that may be new or stressful in the life of your family that would affect your child's behavior while away from home. The rhythm of our day goes a long way toward helping the children develop inner form and the impulse to care for others, their playthings, and their

environment. The playroom environment also affects behavior; therefore, utmost consideration is given to the physical space of the children's rooms. We have found that distracting clothing also effects behavior and the quality of play, so we ask that the children wear clothing without lots of lettering or advertising—simple is best.

Behaviors that are not welcome are:

- biting;
- hitting;
- aggressive behavior;
- threatening or disrespectful language;
- bathroom talk.

Behaviors that will be encouraged are:

- inside voices;
- walking feet, while indoors;
- cleanliness and responsibility in caring for toys;
- sharing and taking turns;
- table manners and safe eating behaviors.

Redirection and pedagogical storytelling will be used to guide children from behaviors that are not acceptable towards behaviors that we wish to encourage.

Approaches to discipline that will be used in The Cottage Garden are:

- Royal "We"
We speak in "we" rather than individualizing the children. This helps them to learn participation.
Ex: "Now we are sitting down," or "We are putting on our shoes," or "We need the door closed."
- Privileged "May"
When asking a child to perform a task or action, we speak with truthfulness. We don't phrase a request as a question when we don't want to receive a yes or no response.
Ex: "You may close the door," rather than:
"Would you like to close the door."
- Pictorial Language

Children live in pictures. When an adult makes a request through the use of creative language, children often respond with delight and enjoyment.

Ex: to encourage a child to help put all the "food" they've made with their sand toys, we may designate a certain part of the sandbox as the refrigerator and say: "let's put the food away in the fridge." They then empty their bowls and cups into the sandbox again!

- Even, Objective Tone of Voice

When our voices waver and escalate to urgency, we lose ourselves (our consciousness) and the child loses respect for us. Discipline is for the benefit of the child and must be done with love and respect.

- Save "NO" for harm to self and others

We try to tell the children what they may do rather than what they may not, by describing what we want to see them doing. For example, if the child was pushing a friend we might say, lets push the wagon, come help me load it up for the woodcutter. Those hands are so strong they need some work to do.

- If NO, then when YES?

What are the underlying needs of the child? Is there a more appropriate way for them to have that need met? Ex: If the child is knocking another child's block castle over, we create a place where things can be knocked over and broken down without disturbing a friend's activity. Respectfully acknowledge that they both want the toy and help them figure out what to do.

- Create healing relative to the deed

Ex: We may gently encourage a child who hurt another to help by giving the hurt child an ice pack or just a kiss on the boo-boo.

- Objectify the deed

Seeing the inherent good in each child, we separate their behavior from who they are. This prevents the child from seeing him or herself as "bad."

Ex: If a child is disrupting the play of others by knocking things over, we may take his or her hands into our own, saying: "I see those hands are knocking into things; let's make them warm and gentle."

- Healing stories

As the children get older this will be used more often, and stories will be told that provide examples and models of how to treat one another with kindness and gentleness. These moral lessons told through stories sink deeply into the child's consciousness and provide a way for them to check their behavior, without specifically citing the moral to the story, as in the fables.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

Separation – The first few days of day care can be stressful for both parent and child. This is natural. We have had many years of experience, and we urge you to have a little ritual with your child as this will help ease you both into the rhythms of The Cottage Garden. We will help you make a plan that suits your family. Often it is helpful, for the first few days, if you come in, read a book, or sit and cuddle on the couch for a few minutes. However, please, don't sneak out, please do say goodbye: "Mommy/Daddy has to go to work now, I love you and I will be back after snack". Your child may cry (you may cry) but it really is best to go when you say you are leaving. This lets your child know that you don't have any qualms about leaving, and that you believe this is a safe place to be left. If we have made a plan for example, to just leave them for an hour, we will have your child ready, on the porch for your return. We will send you a text and or a photo to reassure you.

Arrival – Arrival time is from 8:00-8:30; our door will be open at 8:00. **Please do not arrive before 8:00 am**, as we do use this time to prepare ourselves for the day. Please come in through the porch door. Each child has both a cubby and a hook for shoes, boots, coats and your traveling bag. Please help your child put on slippers when coming inside. In the colder weather, we will bring their slippers indoors. We always begin our mornings with creative free playtime; as the children come in, this will make it easier for them to enter into the group. Please try to come during that time so that they have this opportunity.

Arriving Late and Picking up Early – We would like to ask that if you must be late in the morning, due, perhaps, to a doctor's appointment or an occasional oversleeping, that you bring the children either by 9am or NO LATER than 11am, but NOT

between 9-10am. This will ensure that we will not be interrupted during snack time and that your child will have some playtime outside with us before we have lunch and rest. It is so difficult for them to arrive in the middle of an activity such as eating or tummy-rest and then have their parent leave. We have a strong rhythm and it is disruptive to the children here when someone comes late. The same goes for picking up early. Please try to schedule any appointments after 3:30 so everyone can have their rest time; otherwise, we ask that you pick up your child by 1:00pm or 3:45pm at the earliest in the afternoon. Please speak to Celia if this presents a problem for your family.

Dismissal – Most of the children stay until 4:30. Please be on time as it is a long day for all of us. If you wish to visit a little or breast-feed we you ask that come a bit earlier. You are welcome to pick up from 3:45 on, just text us and let us know. We will not dismiss your child to someone we do not know. Please tell us or give us a written note in the morning if someone other than you will be picking up your child, and better yet, please try to introduce this person to us ahead of time. Some children will leave at 12:30. Please be on time for the 12:30 dismissal and wait on the porch. It is a long day for some, and naptime is waiting for those who stay. The porch door will again be open at 3:45, so you can join us at the snack table if you wish. Some days we may be out in the back yard or waiting on the porch.

Sleep – We believe that sleep and rest are just as important as play. Here at The Cottage Garden we generally have a sort of quiet time after morning snack, when we sing seasonal songs and then we then take out our “story-basket” and sing or tell a nursery rhyme story with a few felted puppets. We tell the same story for up to a month, and eventually, the children are participating in the puppetry. Our rest is at naptime. After lunch, all the children are put to sleep. They each have their own portacrib, or mat with their own pillow, sheet and blanket. We sing, cuddle and sometimes rest a bit with them before we go off to help clean up the kitchen or put the laundry in to wash.

We'd like to add a few words about preparation for your child's naptime at The Cottage Garden. Our primary goal as educators

and caregivers is to help the children to gently individualize. At naptime we want them to be able to self-soothe and to go to sleep on their own. In order to be successful, they need to have had encouragement in this process from you before they come to us. We ask that you try to practice this in the weeks before we begin by having your home naptime at the same time as we do, about 12:45-1:00ish, if possible we ask that you don't breast or bottle feed them to sleep but breast/bottle feed in a chair and then put them down to sleep. We can work on it together. Please let us know if we can help in any way.

Laundry – We do a laundry each afternoon, so you do not have to worry about bringing extra clothes more than once or twice a year.

Clothing – Please dress your children in warm layers. It is colder on the floor where they play, and wool undershirts and leggings are a wonderful investment. We feel it is important that the children are always warm, so we have made outdoor, fleece overalls and hats for cooler weather and cotton seersucker ones for the warmer weather.

Extra Clothing – Each child will have a small, cloth bag, with their symbol on it, for clothing that remains here. As stated above, we do a laundry each afternoon, as we know how busy you are. Please bring FRAGRANCE FREE, LABELED, seasonal clothes, as listed below. We have acquired a collection of clothes, slippers and shoes over the years, so don't be shy about asking one of us about something you need before shopping for it.

- 2 long/short sleeve shirts, depending on the season,
- 2 pairs of pants,
- 2 pairs of socks,
- 2 undershirts or onesies,
- 1 pair of long underwear or under leggings,
- Sweater or sweatshirt, **preferably without a hood.**
- Indoor shoes, which are warm and not slippery while walking.

Outdoor Clothing – In winter, please be sure to send a snowsuit, 2 pairs of gloves or mittens, winter boots and warm outer layers of clothing for going outside to play. In colder, rainy weather, please make sure that they have a rain-suit, or

at least rain-pants, boots or shoes in which they can freely stomp through puddles. In the case of shoes, please make sure they have an extra pair in case one pair gets wet. In warmer weather we let the children go barefoot unless you'd prefer us not to. We ALWAYS wear hats, so please always send one. That said, outdoor clothing is something we have extra of, including boots, gloves and hats. Additional donations to this supply are happily accepted.

Each family will be given a traveling bag to take home every evening. It will contain outdoor clothing you may also need for play at home and/or clothing we could not get dry enough here before the end of our day: outerwear, sweater, socks, snow pants, muddy boots, etc. **PLEASE check the bag each evening for wet clothing and be sure to leave any plastic bags we may have used for muddy, wet clothes in the bag for re-use.**

We have found that distracting clothing also effects behavior and the quality of play, so we ask that the children wear clothing without lots of lettering or advertising—simple is best.

We cannot implore you strongly enough to help us by dressing your child appropriately. What they have on will dictate their mood and influence their play. As they are learning to stand upright, to find their balance, to walk and run, they need simple, practical clothing that does not interfere with walking, climbing, running or just playing, as well as sturdy and preferably, rubber soled shoes that fit properly. Most importantly, they need to be warm! They need to wear a hat in all weather. Children are not truly aware of their own body temperature until they are about nine years old. Please put wool undershirts on them. We would rather that you send too much, as we can always remove things. Also, hoodies of any kind are not welcomed except as an outer jacket for coolish weather. They make it difficult to layer your child's clothing when we go outside, getting "lumpy" on their backs. We ask that children not have any media paraphernalia, writing or pictures on their clothing (little flowers or animals are OK) as it is distracting from the imaginative play that we encourage in our program and we have had a few occasions when another child was frightened by their friend's shirt. Please also try not to have any decorations on the children's clothing that could get torn off and "eaten" by a younger child, such as beads,

buttons, stickers or embroidery. PLEASE TRY TO LABEL EVERYTHING!!

Supplies – With your written permission we will use Weleda or Uriel baby products, Badger or Burt's Bees Insect Repellent and Badger or Jason Sunscreen unless you'd prefer that we use something else. If so, please supply us with these labeled items:

- sunscreen lotion,
- insect repellent,
- diaper ointment,
- powder.

Diapers – We use Bambo Nature diapers, as we believe them to be the safest, most eco-friendly disposable diaper on the market. We also use Seventh Generation wipes.

Dishes etc. – Each child will have one sippy cup for water and one cup for milk. Each cup will be labeled with your child's symbol. Please bring a bottle, to leave here for your child, if needed, and we will label it with your child's symbol. We use china bowls, real cutlery, and as the children get older we have new stainless-steel cups to drink from. We use a different color washcloth for each day, one set for morning snack and one set for lunch, and even one for afternoon snack. The washcloths are soaked in hot water and lavender oil. Monday is purple/lavender, Tuesday is red/pink, Wednesday is yellow and Thursday is orange day. These are the planetary colors for each day of the week. They get washed daily. So if your child tells you it's orange day, you will know why!

Toilet Training – We are very happy to support your child's and your efforts in this department. Toilet training is a very social time here at The Cottage Garden. As the older children here become toilet trained, the younger ones are inspired to do what their friends are doing. By talking and looking at books together, the older ones are silently encouraging the younger ones, and making it seem like it might be fun to try. Please inform us of any special way or method that you are using in your family, and if there is a book or a website that makes sense to you, please share it with us so we can understand

your efforts and be more supportive of them. Please remember that we have many children here and sometimes in the training process we will put a diaper on to go outside, especially as it gets colder and because the children are wearing so many layers it is harder to feel when they have to go! Please put easy to pull down pants on them so that they can pull them down quickly and learn to pull them up again. Please no overalls, too tight pants, belts or jeans with buttons and snaps. Thank you.

Food – We eat healthy, organic, mostly vegetarian snacks and lunches. The only time we might use sugar is if we make rolled cookies for a special occasion; otherwise, maple syrup is used as a sweetener. We will serve organic cow milk, coconut milk, water and sometimes, herbal tea or juice for them to drink. We will always accommodate any food allergies or restrictions into our group recipes.

- Allergies – If your child has any food allergies, especially to milk and dairy, **we need you to send in a doctor's note for our records. Please have the doctor list the replacement foods, for example: not cow milk but soy or rice milk is ok.**
- Food restrictions - please let us know in writing.

COTTAGE GARDEN MENUS

Here are our menus for the year. We may sometimes use frozen, but they will still be organic. They include: sweet potatoes, white potatoes, butternut squash, zucchini, summer squash, kale or spinach, red lentils, peas, corn, onions, celery and Herbamare. Snacks always consist of fresh fruit, and crackers or bread etc. We may serve chicken one day per week; we will ask your permission first.

	Breakfast	Lunch	PM Snack
Monday	oatmeal, applesauce, & milk	cheddar cheese, rice, vegetable soup, milk	We always have either fresh fruit or veggies with crackers or bread
Tuesday	cream of rice, applesauce, yogurt & milk	cheddar cheese, quinoa, vegetable soup, milk	We always have either fresh fruit or veggies with crackers or bread
Wednesday	oatmeal, applesauce, & milk	cheddar cheese, barley vegetable soup, milk	We always have either fresh fruit or veggies with crackers or bread
Thursday	cream of rice, applesauce, yogurt & milk	cheddar cheese, millet, vegetable soup, milk	We always have either fresh fruit or veggies with crackers or bread

We will be receiving USDA funds for all the meals we feed the children. We will be asking you each to sign a form that we need in order to complete the process. This will NOT affect the quality of food we serve. We are not legally allowed to serve nuts, nut butters, raisins, blackberries or raspberries to children under 3 years old. Their year begins in October, so you will most likely have to sign this form twice.

Medical Records for Your Child – We are mandated to keep the following records for your child on file for five years; you are responsible for updating these records immediately upon any changes to this information and/or annually:

- Lead tests – when your child is in an EEC Licensed Childcare they must be tested for lead every year from 1-3 years old.
- Your Emergency Form with contact information—including the name of a backup person (local is best) in case we are unable to reach you—and the phone numbers of the child's doctor and dentist along with your signed consent to obtain emergency medical or dental care;
- A list of everyone who is authorized to drop off and pick up your child;
- A signed and completed Family Information Form;
- Various Permission slips.

According to state law, you must provide us with updated immunization records every:

6 months for infants (up to 15 months),
12 months for preschoolers,

IMMUNIZATION STATEMENT

Vaccines are one of the great public health advances of the 20th century and prevent hundreds of thousands of illnesses in the US every year. Vaccines protect both the person vaccinated and those around them from serious diseases, a concept known as herd immunity. Herd immunity protects other members of the community, such as babies too young to be vaccinated or those who cannot receive immunizations because of a medical condition.

In Massachusetts, the minimum immunization requirement for entry into child care or preschool, for children two years and

older, is 4 or more doses of DTaP, 3 or more doses of polio, 1 dose of MMR, 1 to 4 doses of Hib, 3 doses of hepatitis B, and 1 dose of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine or physician-certified history of chickenpox disease.

As a licensed family childcare, we encourage families to obtain these vaccines according to the schedule recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help safeguard the health of the children and families in our community. We wish to state unequivocally that our program objectives do not include avoidance of, or resistance to, childhood immunization. The health, safety, and wellbeing of children are most important to us. We are compliant with the Massachusetts department of public health regulations and guidelines for licensed family childcare. We encourage families to consider their civic responsibility in regard to the decision to of whether or not to immunize against any communicable disease.

There are two situations in which children who are not immunized may be admitted to school:

1. A medical exemption is allowed if a physician submits documentation attesting that an immunization is medically contraindicated; and
2. A religious exemption is allowed if a parent or guardian submits a written statement that immunizations conflict with their sincere religious beliefs.

Philosophical exemptions are not allowed by law in Massachusetts, even if signed by a physician."

The Cottage Garden may have immunized, under-immunized, or non-immunized children in our program, and because of confidentiality laws we are not able to provide any information about the immunization status of any child in our program.

If there were an outbreak of any communicable disease, we would follow the guidelines set forth by the local health department and/or the CDC.

RE MMR: If a student is exposed to the virus and they have not received the required two doses of the MMR vaccine, the student would be subject to quarantine and exclusion from school per 105 CMR 300.000. The minimum period of quarantine for exposed individuals born in or after 1957, who have not received the required immunizations or do not have laboratory evidence of immunity, will be from the 5th through the 21st day after exposure.

For more information:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/school-immunizations>

https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/09/tk/childcare-memo_0.pdf

Illness Policy – The Cottage Garden program is a long and social time for a young child who is feeling under the weather, which sometimes includes the time after receiving an injection. If your child is unable to go outside to play with us it is better if you keep them at home. Please remember that most children under three and a half are not aware when they need to blow their noses or how to cover their mouths when they sneeze, so they sneeze all over their friends, us or the table! Now, imagine that times 7!!! Yikes! Please, please keep them home for a day or two.

Please keep your child at home if they:

- have not been free of diarrhea or vomiting within the past 24 hours;
- are coughing or sneezing with a runny nose, especially if it is thick and greenish;
- have had a fever within the past 24 hours;
- are on the first two days of allopathic medication;
- are contagious in any way.

Parents, if you are ill but must pick up your child, please call/text us when you arrive, and we will happily bring your child outside to you.

Head Lice:

- If a case of head lice is found, we will notify all of you. Everyone who has been in our home should be checked.
- If your child has a case of head lice, they must be treated and be free of nits before returning to care.
- Rosemary shampoo is a terrific preventative.
- "Fairy Tale" (the brand name) shampoo and treatment are also good products.

We respect the confidential choices of each family in our program. If an emergency outbreak of a contagious disease should occur, we will follow DPH guidelines as to the risk of children in our care.

Absence – Please call or text us either the night before or in the morning, by 7:00, on each day that your child will be absent. The night before, if known, is always preferable, as it helps us to know how much grain to soak for our morning snack or how many cribs to set up for naps. Please call Barbara's cell first in the mornings: 413-374-7419, and then Celia's: 413-348-6035. We prefer a call or a text message to an email, although we will check these as well.

WHEN WRITING, PLEASE CC BOTH OF US, ALL THE TIME.

If your family is away on vacation and will not be returning as scheduled, please let us know.

If one parent is traveling for business, we ask that you please let us know as that can affect your child's mood and behavior.

We will sometimes celebrate a seasonal festival just before a scheduled school vacation. If you know that your family will be gone on the days just before a vacation, please let us know beforehand, so that we can include your child in our celebration in some other way.

Media – We strive to nourish the developing senses of the young child. With this in mind, we stand firmly against the child's exposure to screen-time in general, including: phones, computers, Face Time, television and other electronic media. In saying this, we also understand that communication with friends and relatives sometimes necessitates the use of these devices, and in those cases, their interaction is with another human being, which is the most important part. However, we also know that the noticeable effects of television, computer use and video games—shortened attention span, reduced perseverance and inability to concentrate and play—weaken the child's capacity to learn and can also disrupt the social life of the group. The young child is vulnerable to his or her surroundings and does not have the ability to judge the reality of images presented on television or in computer games; the dramatic content is often beyond their ability to comprehend

healthily. Please remember that DVD's seen on the computer or in the car, car radios and CD's (used in excess) fall into the same category. Childhood is a time for learning through physical activity; for running; for experiencing the wonders of nature; for growing socially; for playing creatively and imaginatively; for singing, talking, quarreling and crying; for laughing, even for being bored! We have observed that electronic devices adversely influence the way children play. Often, they are unable to play creatively, which is an important part of our program. We request that no media or electronic devices be used during the school week, especially before school and before bedtime. Eliminating these electronic devices can greatly enhance your child's development as well as your family's time together. Articles and research about this topic are available in our parent library.

Here are some web sites/blogs we hope you find interesting, there are many more links on our resource page .

- WECAN - Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America, <http://www.waldorfearlychildhood.org/index.php>.
- Elevating Child Care - Janet Lansbury's Online Parenting Resource, www.janetlansbury.com, Janet is a RIE (Resources for Infant Educators) Associate.
- www.youandyourchildshealth.org is Dr. Susan Johnson's web site and it is a wealth of information on many subjects. She is a Behavioral and Developmental Pediatrician and a long-time supporter of Waldorf Education.

Toys – Please do not bring any toys from home except for a special “lovey” that may help your child go to sleep at naptime and that you will leave here. We ask this because we have found it to be problematic for children who have brought something from home—their friends want to play with it as well, and many tears ensue.

Festivals – The seasonal festivals of the year provide a framework for our family and classroom life, giving form, rhythm, and meaning to the passage of time. The festivals offer the opportunity to take a step out of the daily routine and lift our hearts and souls reverently to something larger than ourselves. We will have special stories, songs and foods to

mark changes of weather and the passing of each season. We may celebrate festivals of Harvest, Halloween, Lantern Walk, Hanukkah, Christmas, and Valentine's Day. Spring will be filled with colored eggs, Mother Goose and her felted eggs, hand-made birds, flowers and butterflies and our May Day Festival. We will celebrate most of the seasonal festivals of the year in a low-key way with the children. We know it is hard for many of you to leave work to join us during the daytime, but we hope you will plan on joining us for the scheduled festivals you will find on our calendar listed in the Handbook. Grandparents, close adult friends and siblings are always welcome. We will sometimes celebrate a seasonal festival just before a scheduled school vacation. If you know that your family will be gone the days just before a vacation, please let us know beforehand so that we can include your child in our celebration in some other way.

Birthdays – We love to celebrate the children's birthdays. We will bake special muffins and cake. We will plan these well in advance, so that both parents are able to attend. We will celebrate birthdays at 8:30am in order to make it possible for you all to come. We would love to know when your birthdays are as well. Please include the names and birth-dates of all family members living in your home when you fill out your Family Information Form.

The birthday child receives a gift, handmade by Celia. The birthday family may give a gift to The Cottage Garden if they wish, such as a book, something homemade, food, a candle, or a gift of service such as sewing, general handyperson work, painting or carpentry—we will have many suggestions. Please do not bring any individual gifts for the birthday child from home.

PARENT COMMUNICATION & INVOLVEMENT:

Parent-Teacher Conferences – This is a time for us to have a private conversation about your child. We will have a form at our parent conferences with written observations for us to share with you. These will be filed in your child's folder. We would like to have these twice per year. We will schedule these at a mutually convenient time for both of us. These are for the adults only and we really like both parents to be present.

Parent Visits – We love to have parents visit our program and spend part of a morning with us. This works best for all of us if you come primarily as an observer, helping us to maintain the space and the free-play time for the children. Other than need-to-know information, we don't carry on conversations with each other around them. We are more than happy to make an additional time for conversation with you regarding your comments or questions. If you'd like to come, we request that you ask beforehand and join us any time after November 1. This will give the children time to settle in first.

Parent Lending Library – We have a wonderful collection of books, magazines and journals, which will be available for you to sign out and borrow. They are in the dining room with a sign out basket on top. More books and magazines are on the porch in the Hoosier cabinet.

Email – PLEASE NOTE THAT EMAIL IS THE MAIN MODE OF COMMUNICATION THAT CELIA WILL USE TO CONTACT PARENTS WITH ANNOUNCEMENTS, REMINDERS, AND GENERAL INFORMATION. WE ASK THAT YOU CHECK YOUR EMAIL EACH NIGHT OR MORNING OR TELL US HOW BETTER TO REACH YOU WITH A GROUP ANNOUNCEMENT. We always check our email in the early afternoon while the children are napping, after the children have gone, or in the evening. This is a great way to leave us messages. We will never discuss anything confidential about your child through email. Please use it for messages, announcements and to make an appointment only. We will send you articles, newsletters and websites that we think you may be interested in. Please let Celia know if you would rather we didn't. We are happy to include grandparents or friends whom you think may be interested, please give us their contact information.

Telephone/Texts – We will answer our cell phones during the day if we can, but please be assured that we will always check for messages during a break or naptime if we can't. We will each always have a phone on us if we go outside. Please make a note of both of our phone numbers, but always call Celia's cell first: 413.348.6035; then Barbara's cell: 413.374.7419.

Please feel free to call Celia in the evening if you have any concerns or questions. You may call up to 9:00 pm any evening.

Songs – We will try to share, in writing and over the phone voice recorder many of the songs that we will sing with the children.

Written Communications – We hope that you will keep all communication from us, either digitally or a hard copy, so you can refer back to it as needed.

We are state-mandated reporters and required to report any suspected cases of physical or sexual abuse or neglect.

Financial Matters

- Tuition Policy – We would like to be able to make our program available to all who truly want to be here. We offer sliding-scale tuition in order to make it more accessible. We hope you understand that this is our livelihood and we trust that you will choose a fair tuition rate for your financial situation. Tuition is due and payable on or before the first day of the month, from July 1 through May 1. If the first day of the month occurs on a weekend or a holiday, or if you know you will be away, please ensure that we receive a check, postdated for the first of the month, before that date. You also have the possibilities of either paying with; QuickBooks, there will be a button to pay on your Invoices as of October, 1 2018 or by credit card. If you choose this option, you will be charged 2.75% for a swipe or 3.5% + 15 cents for entering the card manually. Please note that tuition may increase each year.
- Sick Days – Barbara & Celia will be given 4 sick days each per year. If both Barbara and Celia are ill at the same time and we need to close, we do apologize but you will need to have a backup.
- Snow Days – We will make every effort to be open on snow days. However, depending on the severity of the weather and our ability to ensure safety for you and your children, we reserve the right to close for either the whole

day or part of it. We will make our decision by 6:30am and let each of you know by text, email or phone no later than 7:00am. We will not make up snow days. Please call us if you are not sure.

Misc. FYI

- **OUR HOME IS A FRAGRANCE-FREE HOUSEHOLD.** Please, please don't use any strong scents such as essential oils, perfume, cologne, scented fabric softener, or scented laundry soap, as Celia is very allergic to them. Please, this is very important! She is unable to offer cuddles while sneezing or wiping her watery eyes! More seriously, it affects her breathing. We also try to keep a clear, balanced space for the children as we feel this is most beneficial to everyone's health. Thank you for your consideration of our request.
- Please be assured that all cleaning supplies used in our house are chemical free. Lavender is the scent of choice for the young child, as it is known for its calming qualities. We use Dr. Bronner's lavender soap for hand washing, Life Tree lavender liquid soap for cleaning and Seventh Generation laundry detergent (unscented).
- The front porch door will always be locked for safety after the children arrive. **Please make sure the entry door to our porch closes tightly behind you whenever you enter or leave. And the front gate!**
- Please do not ring the doorbell between 1:00-3:30, knock lightly on the door or on the kitchen window, or call/text on our phones—shhhh...children sleeping!
- We will always inform you ahead of time about visitors or visiting volunteers.
- Please remove your shoes when you enter our home.
- Please turn off your cell phones when you come to visit.

- A bulletin board is on the porch; please check it for general notes and news of public events. Feel free to post something you think we would all enjoy.
- Please, no tiny barrettes for the children as they always get lost and a younger child may swallow them. No flip-flops, crocs or backless shoes. No decorative buttons, beads, ribbons etc. on clothing as they can be a safety issue when running and climbing. Again, please keep clothing simple, warm and layered in the colder months. If your child is learning to use the toilet, overalls or belts make undressing difficult for them. Pants are better for climbing and playing for all the children, so please save the dresses for the weekend.

The Cottage Garden Store

Along with my love for children and Waldorf education I also love retail—it's true! I love selling the craft items I make and the products I love, which I think will support our philosophy. *The Cottage Garden Store* is housed in our Hoosier Cabinet on the porch and is also an online entity. I will be making group orders from the retailers mentioned below at different times during the year. I will have order forms available soon, both hard copy and online.

I can offer a 20% discount for:

- Steinerbooks;
- Uriel Pharmacy;
- Dr. Hauschka Skin Care;
- Weleda products.

I can offer a 25% discount for:

- *Danish Woolen Delight*, woolens for the family.

You can get more information from each of their sites by clicking the link on this or the Resource page.

I also have an Etsy Shop, *CottageGardenFibers*, where I sell my felted crafts. Special orders or workshops are always welcome.

Please be in touch if you would like more information, and feel free to invite friends!

Calendar 2019-2020

Tuesday, September 3	We begin our year. Please plan on joining us for this first day between the hours of 9:00 and 10:30am only, for all families. We will have inside play, tidy up and maybe a tiny puppet-play to give you a glimpse into the magical world of our program. Refreshments will be served.
Wednesday & Thursday, September 4 & 5	We begin with two half days; Noon closing, NO LUNCH.
Monday, September 9	We begin with full days. Shorter transitional days, IF NEEDED, will be accommodated all week.
Monday, October 14	Indigenous Peoples Day, closed.
Thursday, November 21	Lantern Festival for all families from 4:00 – 5:00pm.
Wednesday & Thursday, November 27 & 28	Closed for Thanksgiving.
Thursday, December 19	Holiday Festival for all, 11:00 – 12:00 noon. Final Day before holiday break. Noon Closing.
Monday, January 6, 2020	We begin again after the holidays.
Thursday, February 6	Noon closing for Professional Day; NO LUNCH.
Monday, February 10	Closed for Professional Day.
Monday, February 17 - Thursday, February 20	Closed for Winter Break.
Monday, February 24	We begin again after the break.
Monday, April 13	Closed for Easter Monday.
Monday, April 20 - Thursday, April 23	Closed for Spring Break.
Monday, April 27	We begin again after the break.
Thursday, May 7	May Day Festival for all 4 – 5pm; alums are invited. (RAIN DATE MAY 9.)
Monday, May 25	Closed for Memorial Day.
Thursday, June 18	Final Day 11:00am Closing – All children are invited. Family Pot Luck Picnic 11:00 – 1pm.

PLEASE PRINT THIS PAGE, SIGN AND RETURN WITH YOUR FORMS
SO WE KNOW THAT YOU HAVE READ AND RECEIVED THIS

The Cottage Garden Handbook - signature page

Parent or legal guardian's signature

Date

Parent or legal guardian's signature

Date

Respectfully,

Celia Riahi and Barbara Audley

The Cottage Garden
Waldorf Home Nursery

Celia Riahi & Barbara Audley
Amherst, MA 01002
License #9029272
www.thecottagegarden.org

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CELIA'S CELL: 413.348.6035

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