

# CULTIVATING RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE

The aim here is to encourage the Accessible Forest Practitioners to foster belonging, reciprocity, and presence with the more-than-human world as a foundation for guiding others.

## IMPORTANT CRITERIA DO REFLECT ON:

What is my own relationship with nature like today?

Is it grounded in the body, trust, familiarity, or awe? Or does it sometimes feel distant, uncertain, or intellectual?

What assumptions do I carry about how others should relate to nature? Not everyone expresses connection through stillness or quietness. Some may connect through movement, touch, humor, prayer, or art.

How do I acknowledge diversity in land relationships? Different cultures and individuals hold different ways of knowing, naming, or honoring nature. There is no one correct way to relate.

Am I honoring emotional safety as well as physical accessibility? Some people may carry grief, fear, or even alienation in natural settings. How can I create space for all of these to be welcome? How does my personal relationship with the natural world support me to be able to hold these spaces?



## TIPS

**Begin small and repeat often:** Relationship builds over time through consistency, not complexity.

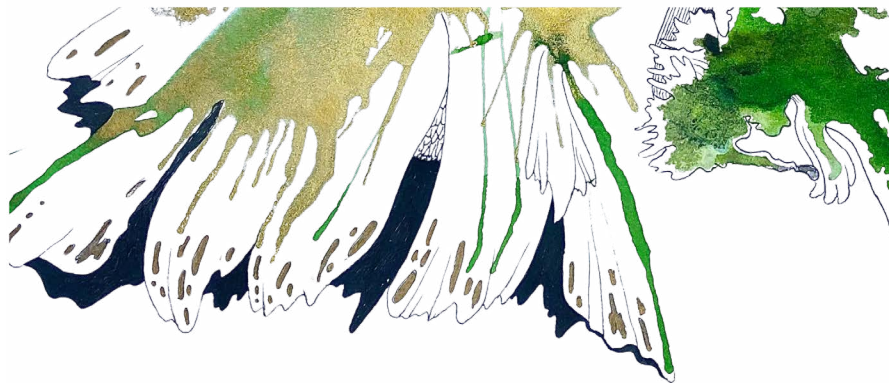
**Name nature as an active participant:** Say “with the forest” instead of “in the forest.”

**Offer invitations, not instructions:** Use language like “What might it be like to...” or “You’re welcome to...”

**Adapt pathways:** Ensure trails or spots are physically accessible and emotionally welcoming.

**Use multisensory engagement:** Touch a tree, listen to birds, smell the earth, see the light, feel the breeze.

**Create rituals of arrival and parting:** A wave to a tree, a breath in gratitude, or a small offering can build relational meaning.



## EXPLORE

**“Meet a Tree”:** Spend time with one tree over multiple sessions—observe, touch, listen, speak, or sit quietly together.

**“What is Nature Noticing About You?”:** Reverse the usual dynamic. What are you noticing around humility, curiosity, and emotional presence?

**“A Place that Knows You”:** Return to the same Sit Spot or natural place regularly. What are you noticing about allowing yourself to be known by that place?

**“Nonverbal Dialogue”:** Use touch, movement, or sound to interact with nature without needing language.

**“Nature’s Welcome”:** Ask yourself, “What signs of welcome am I noticing today?”—a birdcall, dappled light, warm stone, cool air.

## REFLECT

- What gestures, memories, or sensations connect me most deeply to nature?
- Do I feel like nature responds to me? Am I listening for that response?
- What has shifted in me from being “in” nature to being “with” nature?
- What privileges or cultural filters shape how I interpret the land?
- How do I model reverence and humility without imposing it?
- Can I let the relationship unfold without needing to control or explain it?

