

# Botanical Garden offers children chance to step back in time

BY STEPHANIE JADRNICEK  
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SENECA — Children are stepping back in time at the South Carolina Botanical Garden this week. Teaching 19th-century survival skills such as building cabins, cooking on an open hearth and tracking animals, Time Travelers Camp offers kids a peephole into the past.

Botanical Garden education program coordinator Sue Watts said the camp's objective is to help the children realize all of the cultures that have influenced what South Carolina is today. The kids learned about the Cherokee

on Monday by playing traditional Cherokee games, honing their hunting skills and beading.

"We talked about how Cherokees use purple and white beads. The purple beads were the most rare, because they come from a clam shell, and the side that's purple is the one that is much smaller," she said. "So we discussed how it took one day to make one bead, to give them an idea of how valuable they are."

Watts also explained how the beads were threaded into belts to form treaties between tribes. She had one example on hand. The design included trees in the middle of the belt

and two squares on each side made of many purple beads — which demonstrated its value, she said.

"The design is about how they made this treaty between the five tribes," Watts said. "It's part of their history and their communication with each other."

Another example she showed had alternating lines of white beads and purple beads. She said it illustrated the Cherokee's approach to the influx of white people.

"It says, 'the white people are here, and we have to respect the white people, but

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Children at the South Carolina Botanical Garden Time Travelers Camp learned the art of dyeing with indigo on Wednesday.

we have to each go our own way — you don't mess with us, and we won't mess with you," Watts said.

On Tuesday, the day campers trekked down to Hunt Cabin, where they learned the basics in building. They walked inside the cabin to see how it was constructed and also learned about the people who lived there and talked about how life differed then from now. The fact that 10 people — three adults and seven children — once called the cabin home surprised the 21st century kids.

Most of the children's hands turned blue on Wednesday as they learned how to dye fabric with indigo. Watts talked about African cultures coming to the Americas and how the Africans brought traditions such as indigo dyeing. She also explained how African labor and knowledge was relied upon and its importance to South Carolina's history.

Today, the troop will head over to the Hanover House at the garden, and on Friday the kids will learn how to milk a cow and make butter — chores children would have done in earlier times.

Botanical Garden education and resource coordinator James Wilkins said he hopes the camp is, first of all, fun for the kids, but there is a greater goal.

"Whether it's crafts, indigo dyeing or woodworking, we want all these activities to tie into the history of our state and our country and, really, world history," he said. "I like to think of it as a good combination of our natural history and our state's history, and how the two have influenced each other."

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