

Ithaca Children's Garden Summer Camp Guide

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Camp Times

Acorns (ages 3-5): 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM ~ complimentary early drop off beginning at 8:30am

Willows (ages 6-10): 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM ~ complimentary early drop off beginning at 8:30am

Maples (ages 10-12): 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM ~ complimentary early drop off beginning at 8:30am

CITs (ages 12+): 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM ~ complimentary early drop off beginning at 8:30am

AfterCare (Willows and Maples only): 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM for \$60 a week. Please include aftercare when you register for each week you will need it. We understand circumstances may change. Aftercare will be available for \$15/day as long as there is space.

How to Register

How do I register for camp?

Register for camp by clicking on the “Register Here” button on ICG’s [summer camp webpage](#). The button will be available once registration opens. You will be directed to our registration platform, Ultra Camp. The dates below provide guidance on the process and number of weeks you can register for during each registration wave.

Wave 1 (*February 9-February 15*): Camp Lottery. **Three weeks** per participant. This is the best way to ensure a camp week for your camper. **All lottery registrations will receive at least one week of summer camp.**

Wave 2 (*Starting March 9th*): Rolling registration. Campers register for as many weeks as they would like.

Lottery Information

1. Log on any time February 9-15.
2. Set up an [UltraCamp account](#) if you have not already done so. You can choose to do this before the lottery period begins .
3. Participant information, a lottery form, and an optional scholarship form is all within this registration. Indicate how many weeks you are hoping to be assigned (1-3), and then rank the weeks you are able to attend. The more weeks you list, the more likely we will be able to assign you 3 weeks. If a scholarship would make it easier for your camper to attend, please fill out the scholarship questions.
5. That’s the end of your registration for now! You will not provide payment information until you receive your confirmed camp week(s). An ICG staff member will contact you the following week with your confirmed camp weeks and any applicable scholarship codes. Please add

register@ithacachildrensgarden.org to your contacts. Sometimes the email is automatically placed in spam.

6. By March 4th, all camp weeks must be confirmed by placing an initial deposit and setting up a payment plan or paying in full. Any camp weeks that are not confirmed by this date will be canceled.

Paying for Camp

Payment Plan

You must pay in full or set up a payment plan that will be automatically billed to your credit card through the registration form. Payments will be split and billed on the first of each month. **All camps must be paid in full by June 1st, 2026.**

Late Payments and Forms

Summer camp spots will be canceled if payments or paperwork are not received by June 1st. If you are having trouble meeting this deadline or need assistance, please reach out to register@ithacachildrensgarden.org.

Aftercare

Aftercare is available for Full Day campers from 4-5:30 pm. The cost is \$60 per week, per child. We encourage you to sign up when you confirm your registration to ensure an after care spot is available. Aftercare is not guaranteed to run without prior registration.

Scholarship

Scholarship

Scholarships are available for all ICG educational programs, including summer camp. It is ICG policy to never turn anyone away due to inability to pay.

The scholarship form is embedded in the registration of all summer camp programs. Please indicate yes when asked if you need a scholarship during the registration process. There will be no initial fee until the scholarship is applied to your account or you receive your scholarship code.

New to school or not sure if you qualify for Federal Free or Reduced Lunch? [This chart](#) will help. Out of respect for your dignity, we will not ask you to provide financial paperwork or proof.

PUBLISHED DOCUMENT: 2025-03821 (90 FR 11938)											
Income Eligibility Guidelines											
[Effective from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026]											
Household size	Federal poverty guidelines	Reduced Price Meals—185%					Free meals—130%				
	Annual	Annual	Monthly	Twice per month	Every two weeks	Weekly	Annual	Monthly	Twice per month	Every two weeks	Weekly
48 Contiguous States, District of Columbia, Guam, and Territories											
1	15,650	28,953	2,413	1,207	1,114	557	20,345	1,696	848	783	392
2	21,150	39,128	3,261	1,631	1,505	753	27,495	2,292	1,146	1,058	529
3	26,650	49,303	4,109	2,055	1,897	949	34,645	2,888	1,444	1,333	667
4	32,150	59,478	4,957	2,479	2,288	1,144	41,795	3,483	1,742	1,608	804
5	37,650	69,653	5,805	2,903	2,679	1,340	48,945	4,079	2,040	1,883	942
6	43,150	79,828	6,653	3,327	3,071	1,536	56,095	4,675	2,338	2,158	1,079
7	48,650	90,003	7,501	3,751	3,462	1,731	63,245	5,271	2,636	2,433	1,217
8	54,150	100,178	8,349	4,175	3,853	1,927	70,395	5,867	2,934	2,708	1,354
For each add'l family member,	5,500	10,175	848	424	392	196	7,150	596	298	275	138

Illness Policy

Illness Policy

Ithaca Children's garden will adhere to all guidance from the [Tompkins County Health Department](#). That guidance may change between now and summer and we will update and communicate any changes with camp families.

Currently, Ithaca Children's Garden follows a policy similar to Ithaca City School District.

Please keep your child home if they are experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- New loss of taste or smell
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Body aches

If symptoms are resolving and your child has been fever-free and not shown signs of stomach upset (vomiting or diarrhea) for 24 hours without use of medication, then your child may return to camp.

Cancellation Policy

Cancellation Policy

Should you need to cancel your camp registration, please be advised of the following refund structure:

-If you cancel more than 28 days before the first date of the camp week you are enrolling for, you are entitled to a full refund, minus the \$15 deposit.

-If you cancel 14-28 days before the first date of the camp week you are canceling enrollment for, you are entitled to a refund of 50% of the full program payment.

-If you cancel within 13 days of the first date of the camp week you are canceling enrollment for, you will receive no refund*.

If your child is sick and cannot attend camp per our illness policy, 50% of the week cost will be credited to your account to be used during 2026 for any eligible program.

A camper who does not arrive, arrives late, leaves early, or attends only a part of the session will not receive a refund. If a camper is experiencing a difficult adjustment to camp or is otherwise unable to participate, no refund will be granted. ICG refunds all payments for enrollments canceled by us, unless otherwise noted above. Refunds will not be granted to weather-related cancellations.

FAQs

Do you have a waitlist? What are the chances of getting a spot once on the waitlist?

Yes. Camps fill up fast and we do maintain a waitlist. We can't accurately predict the chances of getting a spot when you're on the waitlist. If an opening occurs, you'll have 48 hours to notify us you'd like to take the spot before we contact the next family on the list.

What about siblings?

Siblings will get paired together during the lottery. If you would not like siblings to attend the same week, please note that in their registration form.

What is the difference between Full Day and Half Day camp?

Full Day camp is for children ages 6-12 and runs from 9 am – 4 pm. Complimentary early drop off available beginning at 8:30 am. Aftercare is available from 4:00-5:30 pm for a fee of \$60 per week. Children who are 5 years old but completing kindergarten in June 2024 and will turn 6 by 12/1/26 are eligible for full day camp. The pace of the day, activities, and expectations reflect the development and abilities of school age children.

Half day camp is for children ages 3-5 who are 3 years old on or before July 1, 2026 and runs from 9 am – 12:30 pm. Complimentary early drop off available beginning at 8:30 am. The pace of the day, activities, and expectations reflect the development and abilities of preschool children.

What is the difference between Willows camp and Maples camp?

Willow camp is ICG's typical camp experience focusing on child-led activities and play throughout the day. Each week, morning activities will happen led by mentors and educators focusing on creation and education. Our afternoons are filled with play through different areas of the Garden. Once a week, campers will have a chance to go on a hike outside of the Garden.

Maples camp is for ICG's older campers (10-12) who have completed 4th grade and are interested in a more skill-focused experience. Campers will work on leadership, team building, and learning about the land they live on through different activities. Different themes are offered but each week will allow skills to be built up and improved. Campers can enroll for the entire Maples experience or for as little as one week. The week is meant to allow older campers to challenge themselves while still having room to play.

My child is 5, can they attend Full Day camp?

Five year olds that complete kindergarten in June, 2026 and will turn 6 by December 1, 2026 are eligible for Full Day camp. If you have questions about this policy, please email register@ithacachildrensgarden.org.

Does my child need to be potty trained to attend Half Day camp?

Yes. We understand that many 3 and 4 year olds are still refining their skills and we will help them navigate occasional accidents with dignity and kindness. Children that still wear diapers or pull-ups/training pants during the day are not ready for Half Day camp.

How many children are in each camp?

Acorns: Half Day camp has 15 children ages 3-5 per week

Willows: Full Day camp has 26 children ages 6-10 per week

Maples: Full Day camp has 8 children ages 10-12 per week.

Who makes up your summer staff?

All camp staff are a minimum of 18 years old and are comprised of a blend of college students and adults who have completed their degrees and have related experience.

What is your staff training program like?

All camp staff receive 36 hours of training prior to the camp season. This includes camp systems, policies, health & safety, and ICG philosophy.

Significant amounts of time are spent on child development and playwork principles. We role-play challenging situations and camp transitions and bring in guests to explore topics such as bullying, cultural competencies, positive behavior guidance, and building camp community. Staff work together during training to prepare the Garden for camp and ready rainy-day kits and plan unique activities. By the first day of camp they are a cohesive and supportive team.

What is your staff to camper ratio?

The maximum ratio for our Half Day camp is 1:6, but is often maintained at 1:5.

The maximum ratio for our Full Day camp is 1:12, but is often maintained at 1:8.

Do I need to pack a snack or lunch?

Yes. Please pack a morning snack and a lunch. We will provide an afternoon snack. Some days we may have a cooking activity or a garden gathering activity. If your child's lunch box is looking unusually full, that may be why. These activities may not be enough to replace lunch or snack depending on your child.

My child has dietary restrictions or allergies. Do you make any accommodations?

All afternoon snacks we provide are vegetarian and nut-free. Staff are alerted each week to campers with allergies and their group leader will provide extra support as needed. Campers wash hands both before and after morning snack and lunch to prevent allergen contamination on program materials. Please contact us before the camp season begins should you have concerns about your child's allergies at camp (register@ithacachildrensgarden.org).

What do I need to bring to camp?

- Healthy camper who has sunscreen applied
- Appropriate clothing for the weather
- On rainy days, a raincoat or poncho

- Footwear that can get wet (e.g. water shoes or crocs)
- Dry change of clothes, in a labeled gallon-size ziploc bag, including socks & underwear
- One morning snack. ICG will provide an afternoon snack.
- Nutritious lunch
- One full water bottle labeled with their name
- Sunscreen labeled with their name
- A towel

Please leave special toys and trading cards at home. Items get lost or broken and it is difficult to recover them.

What are your camps like?

Themes & Activities:

Each camp has a theme that informs the morning activities of the week. We try to balance daily activities to provide many ways to interpret the theme: fine motor, gross motor, exploratory, experiments, games, group and individual endeavors. There are typically three activities each morning that all campers rotate through. Each Wednesday or Friday morning we hike outside the Garden, letting us explore that week's theme in a different environment. Special guests often join us to share their expertise.

Structure vs. Free Play:

Mornings at Ithaca Children's Garden Summer Camp are structured. Campers join together for a morning meeting and rotate through themed activities in their smaller groups. After lunch the program shifts to child-led free play. We often begin in the Hands-On-Nature Anarchy Zone but spread into other areas of the Garden as well if campers show interest. Our staff shift approaches from educators to playworkers during this time and their role is to support children's play so that it is as freely chosen, personally directed and

intrinsically motivated as possible. Around 3pm each afternoon, campers wrap up their play and assemble under the story tree for a closing circle after which snack is served. Stories, games, and free play in the Village Green keep us busy until parents arrive.

Large groups vs. small groups:

Half Day campers spend the majority of their time as one group with up to 15 children and a minimum of 3 staff. They may play or engage in activities in self-selected smaller groups within the same area of the Garden.

Full Day campers join together for a morning meeting which often includes songs, stories, and/or games. Campers rotate through morning activities with their small groups then join together for lunch under the story tree. Afternoons are devoted to child-led free play. Groups mix during this time as campers decide where and with whom they'd like to play.

Small groups are determined primarily by age so that activities and the pace of transitions can meet them where they are developmentally. However, we are responsive to campers requests and needs and make changes as needed to ensure groups are a good fit for all involved. If your child is attending camp with a friend, let us know and we can ensure they are in the same group. The same holds true for siblings. Please let us know if you'd like them in the same group for the week.

How are groups determined?

Groups are usually determined by age. We give consideration to siblings and friends and use our judgment on campers who do better in separate groups.

Can I request my child be in the same group as or not in the same group as a friend or sibling?

Yes. It's good for us to know if siblings do better together or in separate groups. Friends often find being in the same group makes camp even more awesome. Please put this request in your registration form or email your request to register@ithacachildrengarden.org. The earlier the better.

Can I attend camp with my child?

The ICG camp day is structured to provide total care and enrichment for your child with your child's safety, wellbeing, and development in mind. It can be confusing and sometimes stressful for children to have parents stay or drop in without notice. If you anticipate a need to visit the site during the day, please alert the camp director.

We want every child to feel comfortable and welcome at camp. Parents are invited, especially if ICG camp is a new experience, to support your child in making a smooth transition into camp. If your child benefits from more leisurely transitions, please plan to utilize the 8:30-9 am period to help your child feel prepared for their day. We request parents say goodbye to their camper by 9am with encouragement for a wonderful day at camp. Although campers are typically delighted to say goodbye to their adult and hello to their camp friends, if you find your child is requesting more of your presence than this time after the first day, please contact the camp director.

My child needs a 1:1 aide or significant support to attend camp. Can this be provided?

Currently, ICG is not equipped with the staffing to provide 1:1 for campers in our care. Several campers have successfully participated in camp with outside support and 1:1 aides arranged by families. Please contact register@ithacachildrengarden.org to be pointed in the right direction to talk more about your child's needs and the support person that may be accompanying them to camp.

My child has support needs that may impact their camp experience. How do I communicate these with you?

Please provide as much information as possible on your registration form. Our Camp Director will reach out to you with questions or for additional information well ahead of your camp experience. If at any time you'd like to ask questions or provide additional information please email register@ithacachildrengardnen.org or call (607) 319-4203 and we'd be happy to discuss your concerns and answer your questions.

What happens when it rains?

We play through sprinkles and light rain. During heavy rain, we'll move activities into the Kids' Kitchen or the Cass Park Pavilion. Emergency shelter is available in our yurt and at the adjacent Cass Park Pavilion.

What if I need to pick up my child early?

Please let staff know at check-in that morning what time you will be picking your child up. We'll do our best to have them ready to go by the time you arrive. Should something arise during the day that requires pick-up before 3:45pm, please call or text the Camp Director. Phone numbers will be provided in your reminder email.

What if we will be late to camp?

If you know you will be late prior to that morning e.g. a scheduled dr. appt), please notify our staff at check-in or pick-up the day before. Should you be running late or if your child is sick and won't be attending camp that day, please call, text, or email the Camp Director.

Can my child come to camp if they are sick?

No. It's very hard to participate and enjoy your time at the Garden if you are not feeling well. If your child is unwell due to vomiting, fever, or diarrhea, or is experiencing any COVID symptoms, they may not return to camp until they are free of symptoms for 24 hours without medication or have received a negative COVID test. If a child is found to have symptoms which appear to be infectious or otherwise prohibit the child from enjoying their camp experience, they will be sent home for the day. Symptoms are based on, but not limited to: fever, vomiting, diarrhea, persistent coughing, fever, or lethargy. If your child becomes sick during the day, you will be notified and asked to pick him or her up immediately. If your child is sent home sick, he/she will be expected to remain home as per the camp COVID guidelines.

What is your sunscreen policy?

Campers should arrive wearing sunscreen. If your child has not applied sunscreen when they arrive our friendly camp staff will ask you and your camper to apply sunscreen before you say goodbye. After lunch each day, full day campers will reapply sunscreen. Our staff will encourage campers to

apply their sunscreen as independently as possible but can assist if asked. If you'd rather your child not reapply sunscreen after lunch, we require a signed note from a parent or guardian. Should your child forget their sunscreen, we have backup on hand they may use.

Where do you go on hikes?

Most Wednesdays or Fridays we head up the Black Diamond Trail adjacent to the Garden. Occasionally, a hike may be taken along the Waterfront Trail, to the inlet, Farmer's Market, or Cass Park depending on children's choice for that morning. If you would like to know where the hike will be taken, please let staff know at check-in so you can be contacted.

Are campers required to be vaccinated?

Per NYS Health Department recommendations, we require age- and grade-appropriate immunizations as required for public school and daycare in NYS. The only exceptions are for children who have valid medical exemptions. For more information see:

https://health.ny.gov/prevention/immunization/schools/school_vaccines/