

Activities for Parents and their children

Plants from Parts

The concept that food comes from plants can be hard to grasp, but taking it backwards—growing new plants from food—makes the connection clearer. New plants can be grown directly from root vegetables in less time than a seed takes to grow large. Use as a long-term project, or start these plant parts sprouting a week before your event and use the results to decorate your space.

Hydroponic (grown without soil) Veggie Tops:

Materials needed:

- Potatoes with eyes; and/or carrot, turnip, beet, parsnip, or other root veggie tops
- Pie plates, glasses, and other dishes
- Toothpicks or small wooden skewers

Activity:

Place the veggie tops top-up in a pie plate and surround them with at least a half inch of water. Put the plate somewhere sunny, and add water as needed to keep the level consistent. Watch new greens sprout from the top in the next week!

Poke toothpicks in a potato so that it can balance in the top of a glass with largest eyes pointing down. Fill the glass with water and set the potato in top. Place somewhere sunny and warm and keep the glass full of water. The potato will take longer to sprout leaves than the root tops will (at least a week longer). If you want to keep this plant once it grows too large for the glass, plant it in soil.

Questions:

- What will happen?
- What changes do you see each day?
- Which parts of a plant are growing?
- How can plants grow without dirt?
- What would happen if there was no water?
- What would happen if there was no light?

Look inside Seeds

Adapted from: <http://www.atozteacherstuff.com/pages/343.shtml>

Everything starts somewhere, and baby plants start inside seeds. This activity may be set-up as a station, with an instructor present to guide small groups (or individuals) at a time through the exploration and discussion.

Materials needed:

- Dried lima beans, soaked in water overnight
- Magnifying glasses (optional)

Activity:

Give each child a bean that has been soaked overnight. These beans will be fragile and fall apart easily, so handle gently.

Questions:

- Do you recognize this bean?
- What do you do with beans?
- Where do beans come from?
- What part of a plant is a bean? (A seed).
- How does a seed turn into a plant?

Encourage all thoughts from the very accurate (“it needs water to grow”) to the imaginative (“the plant fairy kisses it!”), then sum up “yes this seed will need to be planted and watered to grow, but it is already a plant. The baby plant is **INSIDE** this seed, and if you’re very careful and look very closely, you can see it!”

Have each child carefully pull apart the bean (it should almost fall apart on its own). Now look carefully—you can even use a magnifying glass—can you find the baby plant? (If you have never found the baby plant inside a bean yourself, it’s the little curved bit by one tip in the middle with parts that look slightly leafy—see the above website for a diagram).

More questions:

- What is the rest of the bean for?
- How does it help the baby plant to grow?
- What do **YOU** do with a bean?

The rest of the bean is the food for the baby plant, too!

Seed Mosaic

Make a beautiful design with edible seeds.

Materials needed:

- Cardstock, heavy paper, or contact paper, in pieces no larger than 5 sq in.
- White glue in dishes with cotton swabs (if not using contact paper)
- Pencils, colored pencils optional
- A variety of food seeds, like:
Dried beans and other legumes

Rice and other whole grains
Spice seeds such as sesame seeds and whole spices

Activity:

To set up, put seeds in separate paper plates and distribute around the table, making a variety of colors and sizes available near each work space. Pour white glue into small dishes and supply cotton swabs for spreading, if not using contact paper. You may have less mess with contact paper, but the contact paper might not hold large beans as well as glue will, and it will allow for less careful detail. But it may be best for the very young.

Draw a design on your cardstock that can be filled in. Young children can use a simple pre-drawn design of basic geometric shapes, while older children can draw something more complex. Use the cotton swab to paint glue into **ONLY** the sections in which you want one of the smaller seeds. Pour a small amount of seeds onto the glue, then shake them off into their own bowl. Do the same for larger and larger seeds. The largest, such as lima beans or chickpeas, will need to be glued on individually.

If using contact paper, you may want to work opposite this, size-wise, starting with the largest seeds and then filling in the spaces with smaller seeds. You will not be able to pre-draw a design, but instead will create a design directly.

Questions:

- How are these seeds different from each other?
- How are they the same?
- Which seeds will you use to make your picture?
- Where will you put each kind of seed?
- How do many seeds together look and feel different than just one seed?

Garden Bugs: The Edible Version

Materials needed:

- Fruit and vegetable pieces, such as:
 - Lettuce leaves
 - Cherry tomatoes
 - Celery sticks
 - Melon cubes or balls
 - Grapes, berries, and/or raisins
 - Apple slices
- Toothpicks
- Optional: peanut butter, cream cheese, or icing
- A camera (optional)

Activity:

Procedures are the same as The Keepsake Version, but this time, hold the creatures together with toothpicks and, if wanted, edible glue like peanut butter or icing. Continue to question the children about their creatures as described above. When their bugs are completed, it's time to eat them! Take a picture of each creation first to keep.

Questions:

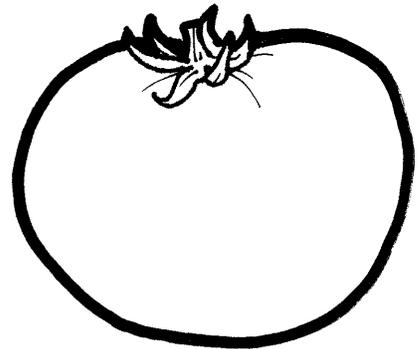
- What will you call your creature?
- What does that creature do in a garden?
- How is the creature you've made different from the real thing?
- How is it the same?

Threading: Around and Around

Build eye-hand coordination in theme: this is one lacing activity that is more than busy-work—it creates a picture. Children will draw a base for their vine and then grow that vine with yarn.

Materials needed:

- Cardstock or light cardboard (such as a cereal box)
- Crayons or other coloring supplies
- A hand-held hole punch
- Green yarn with taped ends



Activity:

First ask some **questions:**

- Where have you seen a vine climbing around and around?
- What kind of vine was it?
- What did the vine climb on?

Color a place for a vine to climb on a piece of cardstock, knowing that the important part is yet to come—green vines. Punch holes at small intervals up and around the edges of the picture, where the vine will go.

Thread the yarn through a bottom hole and knot it (some children may need help). Now the vine is rooted. Thread the yarn up and around and through each hole, growing your vines.

More questions:

- What kinds of vegetables grow this way?
- What kind of vegetable is YOUR vine?

- What other plants grow on a vine?
- What would a vine do if it had nothing to climb on?

Dipping Station

Kids love to dip food! Take this opportunity to introduce them to a wide variety of raw veggies... and a few new and special kinds of dip.

Materials needed:

- Compartmented dishes/trays or several small bowls
- Raw produce cut in easy-to-handle-and-eat sticks and hunks, like:
 - Carrot sticks
 - Celery sticks
 - Cucumber slices
 - Grape tomatoes
 - Broccoli florets
 - Cauliflower florets
 - Raw green beans
 - Sugar snap peas
- Kid-friendly dips, like:
 - Guacamole
 - Mild salsa
 - Hummus (these first three all contain vegetables as principal ingredients so are especially appropriate)
 - Peanut butter
 - Ranch dressing



Activity:

Serve dips directly into children's palettes so that they have their own personal dips. Allow them to choose which they ultimately want to try, but encourage new tastes. Some dips, like guacamole, are delicious but look unappetizing, so they will take some encouragement and role-modeling to be appealing. Helping to make the dips themselves can rouse children's' interests to try them.

Questions:

- Which combination of veggie and dip is your favorite?
- How are the dips you tried different from each other?
- What other kinds of dips would taste good with your veggies?
- What other foods would taste good with these dips?

Water Moves Up Stems

You will need the following materials:

- celery with tops
- white carnations
- 2 glasses of water
- food coloring

1. Add food coloring to the two glasses of water. Put celery in one glass and a carnation in the other.
2. Put the glasses in the sunlight. Leave overnight.
3. Check the celery and carnation. What do you see?
4. A fresh cut stem will pick up the water better.

Sunflower

You will need the following materials:

- yellow construction paper
- small paper plate (one for each child)
- sunflower seeds
- glue

1. Have children cut or tear yellow construction paper in the shape of petals.
2. Glue on to a paper plate
2. Glue sunflower seeds to the center of the flower.

Hand Flowers

You will need the following materials:

- Buttons
- Paper plates
- Finger paint
- glue

1. Glue a button on center of paper plate.
2. Dip fingertips (or hands) into finger paints and use fingerprints 9 (or hands) to make the petals.