

GARDENING

DISCOVERY PLAY ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR YOUNG CHILD

Every child is different, and these are only suggested adaptations and activities. Do what works best for encouraging your child's independent exploration during this suggested play activity. Consult your pediatrician, physical therapist (PT), and/or occupational therapist (OT) first.



STEM Concept(s): Living Things, Observe

Help your child recognize and understand that plants are **living things that grow when they receive the right amount of sunlight, food, and water** by starting a garden. Plants come in **different sizes** (e.g., short, tall, wide, narrow) and **different colors** (e.g., flowers, leaves through the seasons). This garden can be outdoors or indoors in containers (e.g., terrarium, egg carton, paper towel in a plastic bag).

STEM IDEAS/WORDS

- Living
- Grow/Change
- Plant parts
 - Seed
 - Roots
 - Stem
 - Leaves
 - Flower
 - seedling

MATERIALS

- Seeds/plant
- Dirt
- Water
- Watering container
- Shovel/trowel
- Container (e.g., bag, egg carton, flower pot, terrarium)

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

- *What do you notice (see, feel, smell) about this plant?*
- *What do you know about soil? How are plants and soil the same? Different?*
- *What do you want to know about seeds? What plant do you think this seed will sprout into? How tall do you think this plant will be? How do you know?*
- *What do you think plants need to grow? Why?*



GARDENING ADAPTATIONS

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ENVIRONMENT

- If possible, limit background noise & distractions
- Wear sunglasses/hat if sensitive to bright light
- Use modified or flexible seating
- Place activity items on an anti-slip mat or in a container or tray
- Place objects within reach

MATERIALS

- Have child's assistive technology ready and available, including augmentative & alternative communication (AAC) device and/or power wheelchair
- Add additional material(s), such as magnets or Velcro, to objects to make it easier to grasp, lift, or turn

INSTRUCTION

- Use a variety of methods of communication (e.g., sign language, gestures) to meaningfully engage children
- Use pictures and/or icons to signal next steps (see following card)
- Provide prompts to help the child plant a seed
- Provide hand-over-hand support to help the child explore earth materials and plants better



Follow your child's lead and interests. Enthusiastically ask your child questions about what they are doing and what they like.



Answer your child's questions. If you do not know the answer, work together with your child to discover the answer.



Encourage your child to participate in the activity as much as possible. Praise your child's efforts and successes.



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VISUAL CUES

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- Find a container



- Add dirt soil



- Place seed



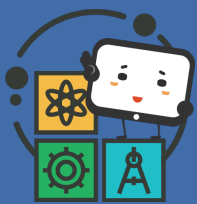
- Water



- Move to sunlight



- Watch growth



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ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS

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- Create a nature journal, add graphs, drawings, observations, photos, nature items. Bring these out from time to time to compare across the seasons.
- Design and build a bird house, bird feeder, and/or bug bungalow to add to a garden
- Visit a garden store, farm, community garden, and/or orchard
- Check out these great books about gardens:
 - *Hello, World! Garden Time* by Jill McDonald
 - *Lola Plants a Garden* by Anna McQuinn
 - *What's in the Garden* by Marrienne Berkes

