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Stories in the Garden



**Discovering
plants,
cultures, &
traditions
through the
magic of
play!**

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Welcome to Stories in the Garden

This week, we're inviting children to slow down, explore, and connect with the natural world in a meaningful way.

In *Stories in the Garden*, children will discover that plants are more than just things we see—they are part of traditions, celebrations, and stories shared across cultures. Through simple, hands-on activities, they'll explore how plants grow, how they're used, and how they connect people to the world around them.

Each activity is designed to be calm, engaging, and easy to follow, using familiar materials and gentle guidance. You may notice moments of sorting, observing, pretending, and creating—these are all ways children begin to build early understanding through play.

As you explore together, you can support your child by:

- Talking about what you see, feel, and notice
- Asking simple questions like "What do you think will happen?"
- Sharing your own experiences with plants, food, or traditions

There's no right or wrong way to do these activities—just opportunities to explore and enjoy learning together.

We're so glad you're here

with blooming hearts.
the gro academy
team

Home Extension: Plants We Use Every Day

Exploring familiar plants through food, observation, and simple discovery

Objective:

Children explore familiar plant-based foods by observing, touching, sorting, and talking about how plants are part of everyday life.

Materials:

- A few plant-based foods (examples: apple, carrot, spinach, rice, herbs)
- Small bowls or plates
- Optional: child-safe knife for adult-supervised cutting
- Paper and crayons (optional)

Instructions:

1. Gather a few plant-based foods and place them on a table for your child to explore.
2. Encourage your child to touch, smell, and describe what they notice about each item.
3. Invite your child to sort the foods by color, size, or type.
4. Talk together about how each plant is used in meals, snacks, or cooking.
5. Invite your child to draw or name a favorite food and the plant it comes from.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer one or two safe plant-based foods for simple sensory exploration. Allow children to touch, hold, and observe while you model simple descriptive words like "soft," "green," or "smooth." Keep the experience brief and calm.

Developmental Connections:

- **Approaches to Learning:** Engagement in hands-on exploration • Flexible thinking while sorting and grouping
- **Cognitive:** Identifying plant-based foods • Sorting by attributes such as color and type
- **Health & Physical:** Using fine motor skills to grasp, move, and sort items
- **Literacy & Language:** Building descriptive vocabulary • Participating in simple conversations about food and plants

Stories in the Garden

Children explore plants through hands-on experiences that connect nature to everyday life and cultural traditions. These activities encourage observation, storytelling, and shared experiences while helping children build understanding of how plants are used and valued across different communities.

Plant Stories Basket

Exploring the meaning and stories behind plants

Objective:

Children explore plants through storytelling, building connections between nature, culture, and personal experience.

Materials:

- A small collection of plants (herbs, flowers, leaves, vegetables, or seeds)
- Basket or tray
- Cloth or natural fabric (optional)

Instructions:

1. Arrange plant items in a basket or on a tray.
2. Invite children to explore using touch, smell, and observation.
3. Choose one item and begin a simple story about it.
4. Encourage children to add ideas or create their own stories.
5. Talk about how people use or experience plants in daily life.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer 2–3 safe plant items. Focus on sensory exploration while narrating simple, soothing language: “This is soft... this smells nice... people use this in food...” Pause and respond to children’s cues, expressions, and sounds.

Developmental Connections:

- **Approaches to Learning:** Engagement • Imaginative thinking
- **Cognitive:** Connecting objects to experiences • Symbolic thinking
- **Literacy & Language:** Expressive language • Listening and responding
- **Social & Emotional:** Sharing ideas • Building connection

Celebration Flower Art

Creating with flowers inspired by cultural traditions

Objective:

Children create simple designs using flowers and plant materials while exploring how plants are used in celebrations and traditions.

Materials:

- Flowers, petals, or leaves
- Paper or cardboard base
- Glue

Instructions:

1. Provide a small collection of flowers, petals, or leaves.
2. Invite children to explore the materials through touch and observation.
3. Encourage children to arrange the materials into a simple design or pattern.
4. Talk about how flowers are used in celebrations or special events.
5. Invite children to share or describe their creation.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer a few large, safe plant materials and a simple surface. Support children in placing and moving items while modeling simple words such as "flower," "soft," and "on." Focus on exploration and gentle interaction rather than finished designs.

Developmental Connections:

- **Approaches to Learning:** Creative expression • Flexible thinking during design
- **Cognitive:** Patterning • Exploring visual organization
- **Health & Physical:** Fine motor control • Hand-eye coordination

Planting with Purpose

Exploring how plants are grown and used in everyday life

Objective:

Children plant seeds or small plants while learning how people grow plants for food, care, and everyday use.

Materials:

- Small pots or cups
- Soil
- Water
- Seeds or small starter plants (herbs or vegetables work well)
- Small scoops or spoons

Instructions:

1. Provide each child with a small container and soil.
2. Invite children to scoop and add soil to their container.
3. Help children place seeds or a small plant into the soil.
4. Guide children to gently cover the seeds and water the soil.
5. Talk about how people grow plants for food, cooking, or other uses.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer a small amount of soil and a sturdy container for scooping and touching. Allow children to explore the texture while you model simple actions like “scoop,” “pour,” and “pat,” keeping the experience hands-on and sensory-focused.

Developmental Connections:

- **Approaches to Learning:** Persistence • Engagement in hands-on tasks
- **Cognitive:** Understanding plant growth • Connecting plants to real-life use
- **Health & Physical:** Fine motor skills • Coordinated scooping and pouring

Scent & Memory Exploration

Exploring how plant scents connect to experiences and everyday life

Objective:

Children explore plant scents and begin to connect smells to familiar experiences, foods, and environments.

Materials:

- Small containers or cups
- Scented plant items (herbs, citrus peels, flowers, spices)
- Cotton balls or fabric (optional, to hold scent)

Instructions:

1. Place a few scented plant items in small containers for children to explore.
2. Invite children to smell each item one at a time.
3. Encourage children to describe what they notice about each scent.
4. Talk about where the scent might be used, such as in food, cooking, or nature.
5. Encourage children to describe what they notice about each scent and what it reminds them of.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Offer one or two gentle scents and allow children to smell with support. Watch for cues and model simple words like “smells good,” “soft,” or “strong,” keeping the experience calm and brief.

Developmental Connections:

- **Cognitive:** Using senses to explore • Connecting scents to real-life experiences
- **Literacy & Language:** Descriptive vocabulary • Expressing preferences

Nature Sharing Circle

Sharing and talking about plants through group experience

Objective:

Children share plant items and talk about their experiences, building connections through communication and group participation.

Materials:

- A small collection of plant items
- Basket or tray (leaves, flowers, herbs, or items children collected)

Instructions:

1. Gather children in a small group and place plant items in the center.
2. Invite each child to choose one item to hold or explore.
3. Encourage children to share something about their item, such as what it looks like or how it feels.
4. Talk together about where the plants come from or how people use them.
5. Encourage children to share something about their item, such as what it looks like, how it feels, or what it reminds them of.
6. Invite children to listen and respond to each other during the sharing time.

Infant & Toddler Adaptation:

Sit in a small group and offer simple plant items to explore. Allow children to hold, pass, or observe while you model simple words and turn-taking.

Developmental Connections:

- **Literacy & Language:** Listening to others • Expressing simple ideas
- **Social & Emotional:** Turn-taking • Participating in group interaction

Facilitator Focus: Stories in the Garden

Theme *Children explore how plants connect to everyday life, culture, and shared experiences through storytelling, sensory exploration, and hands-on activities.*



Overview

In this week's activities, children are invited to explore plants not just as natural objects, but as meaningful parts of daily life. Through storytelling, creating, planting, and sharing, children begin to understand how plants are used, experienced, and valued across different communities. The focus is on connection—between children and nature, between plants and people, and between individual experiences and group learning. Activities are designed to be simple, calm, and open-ended, allowing children to engage at their own pace while building understanding through exploration.



Facilitator Tips

- Keep conversations open and flexible, allowing children to share their own ideas and experiences
- Use simple language to connect plants to real-life use (food, cooking, celebrations)
- Focus on process over outcome—exploration is more important than results
- Model curiosity through observation, description, and gentle questioning
- Encourage children to listen to each other and respond during group experiences



Vocabulary to Emphasize

plant • leaf • flower • herb • grow • smell • soft • smooth • food • share • story

Short Sentence Prompts (for modeling language):

- "What do you notice about this plant?"
- "How do you think people use this?"
- "What does this remind you of?"

Developmental Connections (WMELS Alignment)

Approaches to Learning:

- Children engage in hands-on exploration, show persistence while planting and creating, and use flexible thinking as they sort, imagine, and share ideas across activities.

Cognition & General Knowledge:

- Children build understanding of how plants grow, are used, and connect to everyday life, while practicing observation, comparison, and early classification skills.

Health & Physical Development:

- Children strengthen fine motor skills through handling plant materials, scooping soil, arranging items, and using coordinated movements during hands-on tasks.

Language & Literacy Development:

- Children develop descriptive vocabulary, participate in conversations, listen to peers, and express ideas during storytelling, sensory exploration, and group sharing.

Social & Emotional Development:

- Children build confidence in sharing ideas, practice turn-taking, and develop a sense of connection through group experiences and collaborative exploration.



Reflection for Educators

- How did children engage with the materials and activities?
- What connections did children make between plants and their own experiences?
- How did children participate in group conversations or sharing moments?

