



Garden Projects to Enjoy with your Child

Elementary-aged children love to make things. Here are some projects to try that will connect your child with gardening and nature:

Food Projects

- Grow vegetables and harvest them with your child's help.
- Slit the spur of a nasturtium bloom and sip its hidden cargo of nectar.
- Sip the nectar from the honeysuckle blossom.
- Eat the green hollyhock cheeses (seed pods). Cook them in a bit of oil and add them to salads.
- Make pizza or pasta sauce using the produce from a Pizza Garden Pot
- Add edible flowers in a salad (pansies, nasturtium, borage, Johnny-jump-ups). Save extra edible flowers, rinse, spread on paper towels to dry, place in a bottle to use as a rainbow-colored salad topping.
- Make crystallized flowers
- Make herb butter to spread on bread
- Wrap alpine strawberries in leaves of chocolate mint.
- Make floral ice cubes by adding washed blossoms of borage, mint, Johnny-jump-ups, and freeze.
- Make Sun Tea. Wash a handful of long mint stems and place in a 2-qt. bottle or pitcher, filled with cold water. Set outdoors in the sun for 12 hours. Strain and chill. Drink with lovage stalks and serve with a sprig of mint.
- Sprinkle Johnny-jump-up flowers and alpine strawberries on top of lemon sherbet.
- Roast sunflower seeds. Preheat the oven to 200 degrees F. Spread the sunflower seeds on an ungreased cookie sheet and salt lightly. Bake for 3 hours, stirring once each hour. Cool and store covered in a cool place.
- Make a sunflower snack. Take browned sunflower seeds and spread them on a work surface covered with a 12-inch sheet of waxed paper. Use a rolling pin or potato masher to crush the seeds into a coarse meal. Pour the meal into a bowl, add 1 T. peanut butter and mix with fork. Add more peanut butter until mixture is firm. Roll into ping-pong sized balls. Wrap in waxed paper or plastic wrap and store in refrigerator for snacking.

Plant Projects

- Grow kitchen waste gardens from carrot tops, orange pips, avocado seeds, etc.
- Bundle herbs to steep in bathwater
- Germinate a corn or bean seed in a clear plastic cup stuffed with wet cotton or paper towel, placing the seed between the cotton and the plastic side for viewing
- Dry flowers and make into potpourri or sachets.
- Press flowers to use on cards, bookmarks and window hangings
- Harvest seeds and put in envelopes with drawings of the flower
- Collect and press autumn leaves between wax paper to hang on windows
- Grow bulbs for winter bloom, forcing narcissus, crocus, tulips or hyacinths
- During the winter, force blooms by cutting branches of forsythia, plum, cherry, apple, pussy willow, hawthorn, lilac or spirea and placing in water.
- Harvest gourds, wipe them off and dry them in a warm, protected, airy place, turning them every few days.
- Make a sunflower wreath by cutting out the center of a giant sunflower head. Add to the wreath by glueing acorns, pods, nuts, or cones to the ring.
- Float dolls made of flowers or boats made of walnut shells in a stream or lake.

Animal Projects

- Make a compost wormery
- Make a worm observatory
- Watch insects pollinating flowers
- Make insect shelters using dried plant stems, like fennel and thistle
- Find and watch a chrysalis or cocoon hatch
- Make a winter lodging for carpenter bees, mason bees, and leaf cutters. Nail a coffee can to a mounting board and stuff it with sunflower stalks. Attach to a sheltered spot.
- Make a stumpery—logs sunk as posts of different heights, in a shady spot, plant ferns around them, water. Moth Broth—mash a rotten banana or peach with brown sugar and water to form a thin paste. Let mixture ferment in the sun for two days. Paint onto smooth tree trunk in a dark spot. At night check for moth activity with a flashlight.
- Tell time using a snowy cricket—count the number of times the cricket chirps in 15 seconds and add 40 to calculate the temperature in degrees Fahrenheit.

Bird Projects

- Make a bird bath
- Make birdfeeders
- Put out saucers of water and bouquets of wheat, corn, millet, and sorghum, tied to posts and birdfeeders.
- String dried sunflower heads with wire to a rope strung between trees or fence posts for feeding the birds.
- Make a sunflower wreath by cutting the center out and giving to the birds.

Other Projects

- Make a scarecrow. For an unusual head, use a terracotta pot, filled with soil and grass seed. Water and trim the grass as desired to create a hair style.
- Make a willow den. Stick branches of willow in the ground, weave them into shapes, water and watch them leaf out.
- Make a weather monitoring system with a thermometer and a rain gauge. Check regularly and keep records.
- Make a fairy house with your child out of bark, moss, twigs, and stones.