

Springtime Learn and Play



Pressed Flower and Leaf Notecards

Overview: Capture some springtime beauty and encourage a sense of wonder with a garden exploration to collect leaves and flowers to press and preserve. You can use your pressed cuttings to inspire a host of art and gift projects, including notecards.

Materials:

- Plant cuttings of various shapes, sizes and colors. Some of the best plants for pressing are: Alyssum, Baby's breath, Buttercups, Coreopsis, English Ivy, Ferns, Forget-me-nots, Johnny jump-ups, Larkspur, Lobelia, Queen Anne's Lace, Pansies, Salvia, and Scaevola
- Facial tissues or newspaper
- Large heavy books (phone books, catalogues, textbooks, encyclopedias, coffee table books)
- Thinned white glue or Mod Podge (a water-based sealer, glue, and finish)
- Paintbrushes for glue application
- Heavy weight paper
- Contact paper or lamination equipment (optional for better preservation)

Instructions:

1. Take kids to the garden and instruct them to carefully pick flower and leaf samples. Some flowers press better than others, and others may rot before they dry (see list of flowers that dry well in materials section). Small, flat flowers, tend to press better than bulky ones. Try pressing individual petals of larger flowers. To ensure success, choose a variety of plant material, and collect more samples than you think you will need. It's best to collect plants for pressing when they are free of dew or rain.



2. Place the plant material between sheets of facial tissue or newspaper. You can lay numerous flowers or plants of the same thickness on the same piece of tissue, as long as they don't touch. Paper towels can be used but they tend to leave bumpy texture in the finished product. Then place the flowers and paper into an old phone book, comparable large book or in between two heavy books. Then place a few heavier books (or other source of weight like bricks) on top to make sure that the samples dry flat. Lay the books on a flat surface. Make sure if you're placing flowers between book pages, that you only use books of lower value to you. There is the potential for page or spine warping depending on the thickness of the plant material and if any molding occurs. To avoid this place them between the covers of two books.

3. Wait at least two weeks before checking your samples. Flowers and leaves contain different amounts of water so drying times vary. If samples feel dry to the touch and separate easily from the tissue, they're ready for step 4.

4. Give kids heavyweight paper to fold into cards. Have them consider where to place the specimens on the card, apply glue to the paper with paintbrushes, and gently stick the pressed plants onto the glue.

7. There are two methods you can use to help the cards last longer:

- Cover the plants with a layer of Mod Podge immediately after completing the design. Apply it very gently to avoid tearing the specimens and let it dry completely over a day or two.
- Let the adhesive glue dry completely, and either laminate the cards or cover them with contact paper.

8. Once the cards are complete, help kids write a note to someone special!



Springtime Scavenger Hunt

Overview: A scavenger hunt can be a fun way to encourage young gardeners to practice using their observation skills while also increasing their knowledge and awareness of seasonal plants, animals and elements.

Materials:

- List of things to find applicable to your area, or printed Springtime Scavenger Hunt Worksheet
- Clipboards (pieces of cardboard and thick rubber bands are a great alternative)
- Writing instruments (markers, crayons, pens, or pencils)
- Magnifying glasses (optional)

Instructions:

Discuss the seasons with children and brainstorm all the signs of spring in your area before your hunt. Create a list of common springtime plants, animals and elements in your local garden or green space, or use the provided worksheet. Head outside to your chosen springtime hunt location and give each child a scavenger hunt sheet on a clipboard and a writing instrument, then encourage them to look closely and carefully for all the items on the list.



Tips: If working with children for whom clipboards are difficult to handle, consider making a large poster of your scavenger hunt items and marking off or tallying your finds as a group. Remind children that flowers provide food for animals and turn into fruits and seeds, so they're best left on plants. Pre-scouting your green space for trash/hazardous materials and explaining before hand that not finding everything on the list is okay are great ways to set up your scavenger hunt for success.

Additional Resources:


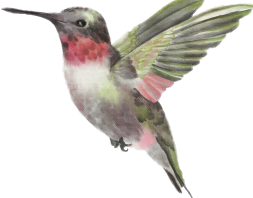













For information on how gardening activities align with Head Start Program Performance Standards and the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, download the National Farm to School Network's excellent resource - Growing Head Start Success with Farm to Early Care and Education available at:

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/resources-main/growing-head-start-success-with-farm-to-early-care-and-education>

More gardening resources for early childhood educators are available at <https://kidsgardening.org/ece-resources/>

Springtime Scavenger Hunt

Mark the box of each springtime item that you find! Turn your hunt into springtime bingo by seeing who can find every item in a column, row, or diagonal first.

 <p>Butterfly</p>	 <p>Hummingbird</p>	 <p>Squirrel</p>	 <p>Blossoms</p>
 <p>Worm</p>	 <p>Grass</p>	 <p>Ladybug</p>	 <p>Puddle</p>
 <p>Caterpillar</p>	 <p>Bunny</p>	 <p>Sun</p>	 <p>Bee</p>
 <p>Bird/ Nest</p>	 <p>Snail</p>	 <p>Flowers</p>	 <p>Clouds/ Rain</p>