

READY

Children learn how to grow vegetables by planting seeds or seedlings and learning how to care for them.

SET

- Review Grow Your Own: Helpful Hints for Leaders.
- Gather enough materials for each child to grow his or her own vegetable.
- Make at least one hole in the bottom of each container to drain excess water when plants are watered.
- Create a set of supplies for each child, including a container, a starter or seeds, a small bag of potting soil, and supplies for making a marker.
- Have water available for children to add after they have planted their starters or seeds.
- As an alternative, you may do this activity in small groups, where one child transplants, one adds the soil, one makes the identifying marker, and one waters the plant, or you may set up work stations for each step of the planting process.

GO

1. Lead a discussion before beginning the actual gardening activity.
 - How many of you have planted your own garden before or helped someone plant a garden?
 - What types of plants did you grow? Did you grow any fruits or vegetables?
 - What can you tell the others about gardening?
2. Discuss with the children the kind of plant (vegetable) they will be growing, how long each plant should take to grow, and any special care instructions for the plant that will be grown (e.g., frequency of watering, full sun, shade, etc).
3. Demonstrate how to transplant their starters. Try to bring a fully-grown plant so that the children can see what their starters or seeds will look like after growing.
4. Give one set of planting supplies (container, starter/seeds, and potting soil) to each child.
5. Help the children transplant their starters. Tell the children to add extra potting soil and to water the plant when they are finished. Ask the older children to help the younger children when they are finished with their own transplanting.

Grow Your Own



TIME

- Prep — 10 minutes
- Activity — 30 minutes

MATERIALS

- One vegetable starter kit (seedling) per child (seeds can also be used)
- One bottom half of a half-gallon milk carton or two-liter plastic soda bottle or one Styrofoam cup (about 4 inches in height) per child
- Potting soil
- Water
- Pencils
- Sticks (tongue-depressor, Popsicle stick, emery board, straw)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- Paper
- Vegetable clip art (see Appendix)



Grow Your Own

6. Distribute supplies for making markers to the children and let them create identifying markers for their plants.

- Use the vegetable clip art (see Appendix) to help children make their markers. You can make copies of the clip art for children to cut out, color, and glue on the stick. They also can trace the shapes from the clip art onto paper, cut them out, color them, and glue them on the sticks.
- On the identifying marker, children should write the name of the vegetable, instructions for care, and how long it should take the plant to grow. As an alternative, create instruction cards in advance to hand out to the children.
- When finished, children can insert the finished marker into the soil next to their plants.

7. Lead a discussion with the following questions:

- How can we help our plants grow?
- When our plants finish growing, what will we be able to make with the vegetables that we planted today?
- What are some good things about growing your own vegetables?

8. Conclude the activity by reminding the children to water their plants when recommended and, if necessary, to move their plants to a larger container when it grows bigger.

GO FARTHER

- Ask a farmers' market manager, local grower, or master gardener to talk to the children about gardening or farming.
- Have the children keep a weekly diary that includes both writing and illustrations of when they water their plant and their plant's growth. You can create a science project by having children track the plants' care and growth.
- Take a field trip to a local garden or farm.
- Harvest the vegetables and taste them. Have children describe the taste.
- Create and eat a salad or other dish with the vegetables and a healthy dressing.

BRING IT HOME

- Invite caregivers to the gardening activity.
- When their plants have outgrown the containers, allow the children to take them home and transplant them in their families' gardens, a larger container at home, or a community garden.
- Encourage the children to visit a local garden or farm with their families and share the experience.