

Caring for Nature

The best way to teach young children to appreciate the wonders of nature is through direct experience. The first step in teaching children to care for nature is to help them enjoy exploring and interacting with other living things in a respectful and caring way. Through these positive experiences, children will begin to learn that people have a place in caring for the other living things that share the environment with us.

In *Flower Garden* we meet a young girl who lives in the city. She helps create a special flower garden as a birthday surprise.

Flower Garden

BY EVE BUNTING



Where do the little girl and her family live? Is it similar or different than where you live?

If you could make a gift for someone special, what would it be? How would you do it?

Let's Get Growing

Caring for Nature ACTIVITY

What this activity is about:

In this activity, children will find out by experimenting what plants need to grow and be healthy.

Length of time
needed:
about 30 minutes and
ongoing observations.

Environmental science skills:

- Planting
- Predicting
- Comparing
- Observing change over time

What's needed:

- Four paper or plastic cups
- Potting soil
- Small gravel or stones
- Water sprayer bottle
- Packet of marigold or radish seeds

How to do it:

- 1:** Collect the materials for planting on a table. On a piece of paper write the number and description of each cup for the experiment: Cup One, no soil; Cup Two, no water; Cup Three, no sun; Cup Four, soil, sun, & water.
- 2:** Show your child the materials and describe the experiment that you'll be doing to see what seeds need to sprout and grow. Make predictions about what you both think might happen to the seeds in each cup. Encourage your child's ideas! Write the predictions on the paper you have already marked for each cup so that you will have a record of the ideas.
- 3.** With your child's help, prepare the cups. Here is a plan for the four cups:
Cup One (no soil)—Fill a cup with small stones, bury two seeds in the stones. Water the seeds by spraying them daily. Place the cup on a sunny windowsill.
Cup Two (no water)—Fill the cup with potting soil, bury two seeds in the soil.

Place on a sunny windowsill. Do not water.

Cup Three (no sun)—Fill the cup with potting soil, bury two seeds in the soil. Give the seeds water by spraying them daily. Place the cup in a dark cupboard or closet.

Cup Four (soil, water, and sun)—Fill the cup with potting soil, bury two seeds in the soil. Give the seeds water by spraying them daily. Place the cup on a sunny windowsill.

4: Take turns with your child watering the seeds. Make observations, discuss and record what happens with each cup. After two weeks, compare the four different cups. Have a discussion about what you have discovered. What do seeds need in order to grow?

Going further:

Have your child plant a few flower seeds in a cup of soil. Discuss and make a plan for how you will take care of the seeds based on what you have learned in the above experiment.

Bring in potted flowering plants to make a windowsill flower garden. Have your child help transplant and care for the flowers.

Take a field trip to a plant nursery or greenhouse to see the wide variety of growing plants.

Collect colorful flower pictures or seed catalogs. Your child can make collage gardens by cutting out pictures and arranging them into their own gardens.

