

Seasonal Planting

SIXTH GRADE

Everybody loves to plant in the garden! Due to the seasonal nature of growing a garden and the logistics of sharing garden space, just a little bit of advance planning will ensure a successful class crop. In this activity, students will plant seeds in a garden bed, make a nature journal entry, and pitch in to do some garden care tasks. Have fun!

SUBJECT

EXPLORE

TIME

30 - 45 MIN

MATERIALS

Empty garden bed (filled with soil but not plants) or empty spaces in the garden beds

Seeds or seedlings to plant

Comprehensive Planting Chart for Zones 9 and 10

Trowels

Watering cans

Finished compost to sift (if applicable)

Black nursery trays

Buckets

Wheelbarrow (if available)

12 - 15 leaves of the same type, either found on the ground or picked from a tree

Blank paper, 1 per student

Pencils, 8-10

Clipboards, 8-10

DIRECTIONS

- A few main tasks will be important to work out as you plan this activity. You will need to:
 - Identify a garden bed to plant in. The assignment of garden beds varies from school to school, so it's best to get in touch with your school's garden coordinator for guidance. If your school doesn't have one, reach out to the district's garden liaison, Barbara Larson of BCK Programs (barbara@bckprograms.com).
 - Identify what you are going to plant. If you are in touch with Barbara, she may be able to get seedlings for your class to plant. If you want to go with seeds, refer to the laminated planting guide titled "Comprehensive Planting Chart for Zones 9 and 10" from the San Diego Seed Company. Locate the month and then look for the O symbol to identify the "Crop Family" varieties that can be planted from seed in that month. Then check to see which of those varieties you have in the Seed Library.
 - From the seeds you selected, read the back of the seed packet and note the planting information so you can plan out the garden bed and direct students on how to plant their seeds (generally, students can use their finger to poke a hole for their seed). You can place trowels or popsicle sticks in the places where students should plant - look for spaces near the emitters in the irrigation tubes so they are planted close to water. Use the Crop Planting Worksheet to record the information from the seed packet, if desired. Plan for students to water the bed after they plant their seeds.
 - Refer to the Garden To-Do List and survey the garden to predetermine the tasks you will assign to students.
 - Schedule one or two volunteers for the day of the activity to help supervise the rotations.
 - Plan to divide students into three groups to rotate through the following stations: Planting, Garden Care, and Nature Journaling.
- On planting day, gather students in the outdoor classroom and introduce each of the three stations.
 - Station 1 Planting: Share with students the types of crops they will be planting and any information about why these were selected. Explain that they will be given specific instructions on how to plant their seeds when it's their turn to plant in the garden bed.
 - Station 2 Garden Care: Identify the tasks that students will complete and any tools they will be using. Talk about how to use

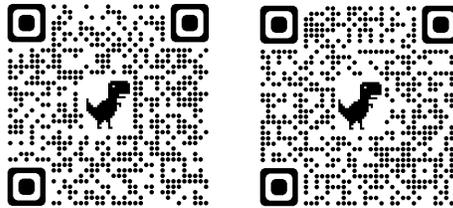


tools safely and other garden rules (walk at all times, keep tools below the waste, etc.).

- Station 3 Nature Journaling: Students will do an activity called “Zoom In, Zoom Out,” where they will select an object and draw it at three scales: from a distance, actual size, and zoomed in. Give students about a minute to select their objects, then give the following instructions to students to guide their drawings. You may want to give students a brief overview of the activity and then leave the detailed explanation for when they are in their rotations.
- (Life-size) Draw a view of your object that is exactly life-size. If it is larger than the page, only draw a portion of it.
- (Zoomed in) Select a part of the object that you find interesting and ‘zoom in’ to observe it in detail. To show this view, draw a circle around that part of your drawing. At the side of the paper, draw a larger circle and draw a magnified view of that same area showing details that are too small to be shown in the life-size picture.
- (Zoom out) Next, imagine your object as if you’re looking at it from afar. Did you select a leaf from a tree? In the zoomed out view, you would draw a picture of the entire tree. Draw the zoomed out view in a blank spot on your paper.
- Assign students to their groups and spend 10 minutes at each rotation. Spend the final 5 minutes enlisting students’ help to put away tools and tidy up the garden.

SOURCE

- BCK Programs | Seasonal Planting
- San Diego Seed Company | [Planting Chart](#)
- John Muir Laws | [Zoom In, Zoom Out](#)



Garden To-Do List

- 1. WEED.** Check for weeds inside and around the outside of garden beds, in the pathways, and around the perimeter of the garden. Use a trowel to pull weeds out from the roots. Collect weeds in one pile, and make sure it's out of the pathway. This will be the debris pile for the garden and will be collected by the grounds crew within a couple weeks.
- 2. WATER.** Fill up a watering can and check for thirsty plants. If there are rain tanks in your garden, use that water for any ornamental plants but not in the garden beds. Signs to look for are plants that are droopy, have yellow or brown leaves, or have leaves that are falling off. Water the soil around each plant for about 5-10 seconds, just enough to saturate the ground around them. If your garden has any potted plants, they will surely need a drink. Water potted plants for 5-10 seconds each, let the water seep in, and water for another 5-10 seconds.
- 3. RAKE UP LEAVES.** Check for areas in the garden where trees have dropped their leaves. Rake the leaves and place them in a pile next to the compost bins. The leaves will be combined with food scraps to make compost. You will be doing the composters a favor by collecting the leaves as they are essential for composting.
- 4. COLLECT SEEDS FROM SPENT PLANTS.** Check the garden beds and perimeter of the garden for plants with spent flowers. Spent flowers are flowers that have finished flowering and are dying off. The dead part of the flower usually contains seeds. If the plants produced obvious seeds, like sunflowers, sweet peas, or pea pods, collect the seeds and save them in a seed envelope. Ask your teacher for seed envelopes that are provided with the garden activities supplies. Label the seed packet with the name of the plant (if known) and any other information you can find. Place the remainder of the dead plants in the pile with the weeds, or make a new pile out of the pathway.
- 5. SIFT COMPOST.** Check the active stack compost pile (this is different from the worm bin, and should have a sign next to it). If the pile looks dark brown, does not have any visible food pieces in it, and no or very few noticeable leaves and twigs, it is ready to sift. Grab a black nursery tray and place a scoop of compost in the tray. Grab a bucket or wheelbarrow and sift the compost over it. Discard any trash pieces in the trash and return the larger objects and any insects (like worms) to the compost pile. Feed the plants with your sifted compost by spreading a handful around each plant in a garden bed. **NOTE:** Please do not sift all the compost to share this activity with other classes.
- 6. HARVEST WORM COMPOST.** Worm castings are the digested dark matter in the worm bin that does not have visible signs of food- the "Black Gold"). To separate castings, grab 3 small paper trays for each small group of students (these should be located inside the worm bin). Place a small scoop (1-2 cups) of the digested compost in one tray (this will be from the side of the pile that has no visible signs of food and is a dark brown/black). Bring the trays to the tables and pick out the worms placing them in tray 2 and pick out any trash and placing it in tray 3. Place the worms back in the worm bin, throw away the trash and sprinkle the castings around the base of the plants in the garden beds. Use a watering can to water over the applied castings.
- 7. CLEAR AND ORGANIZE CLUTTER.** Sometimes things get left in the garden and need to be organized from time to time. Collect all buckets and stack them in one spot, do the same with nursery pots, organize the potting supplies and put away tools and gloves.
- 8. PICK UP LITTER AND EMPTY TRASH.** Grab a bucket and take a walk around the garden and pick up any litter you find. Be sure to check the perimeter next to fences, where litter tends to collect. Collect all the litter into one bucket and discard it in the nearest trash can. Return the bucket to the garden.
- 9. EXTRA TASKS:** Make a list of extra tasks that need to be done in the garden, like trimming trees, more weeding, etc. and give the list to your teacher so they can give it to the garden coordinator.

