



Everything Grows

Children observe plants and trees all the time. They often ask questions about how things grow. Help your child discover living things by using some of these ideas.

INFANT:

- Lay a comfy blanket down on the grass and lie underneath a tree with your baby. Talk about the number of trees, branches, and leaves you see. Talk about how strong the wind is blowing. Repeat the word "tree" and let your baby touch the tree's leaves and trunk.
- Point out the flowers in your home, garden or park to your baby. Allow your baby to touch and smell the flowers. Name the colors of each of the flowers.
- When outdoors with your baby, point out how the leaves on the trees move. Show your baby the different shades of the leaves.

TODDLER:

- With spring approaching, take your child to a local nursery to select seeds for planting. Make a list ahead of time of what you want to plant in the garden. This list may include beans, peas, and sunflowers.
- Put on some soft music and ask your child to pretend that she is a tiny seed that grows into a plant. Have your child act out the motions with music.
- Have your toddler help you water household plants. Invite her to observe the plants closely as you describe the different shapes and colors of the leaves.
- Take the seeds out of various fruits and vegetables. Have your child sort the seeds by size, shape, color and/or texture. Talk with your child about what he sees. Ask, "Why do you think the seeds look different from one another?"

PRESCHOOLERS:

- Go on a nature walk with your child. Bring paper and crayons, and have your child draw pictures of the trees, flowers and other plants that he sees. Talk about his observations. Does the plant have flowers? If so, what do the flowers smell like? How are the leaves shaped?
- Take three or four seeds from a citrus fruit (i.e. orange, lemon, grapefruit, lime) in your kitchen. Help your child to fill a four-inch diameter pot with moist potting soil. Then, let your child plant the seeds about an inch deep in the soil. Help your child water them daily. Let your child know that the seeds should sprout within two to four weeks and they will smell just like the citrus fruits their seeds came from! As the seedlings grow into tiny individual trees, help your child transplant them into larger pots. Keep track of your child's comments and questions as she watches the seeds grow into plants. Make a chart of her questions, predictions, and observations.
- Slice off the head of a root plant (i.e. carrots, beets, parsnips) along with 1-2 inches of the root. Assist your child in placing the head in a saucer filled with pebbles and water. After about a week, brand new greens should begin to appear from the top of the head. When this happens, help your child transplant the plant into a small pot of soil. Help your child keep the root well-watered, and watch it grow! A plant journal is perfect for this activity.

Book Suggestions:

Fran's Flower. Lisa Bruce. Harper Collins, 2000.

Tiny Seed. Eric Carle. Simon and Schuster, 2001.

Lunch, Denise Fleming. Macmillan, 1996.

Planting a Rainbow, Lois Ehlert. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1992.

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