Theme 22: In the Garden

Additional Books:

**Fiction:**
The Carrot Seed by Ruth Krauss

This is a story about a little boy who plants a carrot seed, takes care of it and patiently waits for it to grow. His mother, father, and brother tell him that the carrot will not grow! Despite what everyone says, the little boy continues to take care of his carrot seed until one day a carrot comes up!

**Non-Fiction:**
How a Seed Grows by Helene J. Jordan

What does a seed need in order to grow? This book explains the steps for turning a packet of seeds into a garden. Differences in tree seeds and flower seeds are illustrated as well as seeds that grow slowly and those that grow fast. The book also includes fun activities to illustrate how a seed grows.

Ideas for Reading the Books

“**The Carrot Seed**”

Before reading *The Carrot Seed*, print the word “seed” so the children can see it. Tell them that you are going to read a book about this word and see if they can guess what is says.

- Talk about what a seed is and then give each child one carrot seed to hold while you read the book. Don’t let them see the carrot seed package!
- Ask the children to guess what kind of seed they are holding. If they planted their seed in the soil (vocabulary word) and watered it each day, what do they think they would see when it grew out of the ground?
- Without reading the title of the book, tell them that you are going to read a book about a little boy who planted a seed just like the one they have in their hand. See if they can figure out what kind of seed the book is about. The first page of the book says that it is a carrot seed. Don’t say anything unless they say something! Read a few more pages and then ask if they know what kind of seed the little boy planted. If not, tell them to keep listening and try to figure it out!
- After reading the book, show them a real carrot and talk about the fact that the carrot use to be a little seed just like the one they are holding!

Also Try…

- As you read *The Carrot Seed*, stop and encourage the children to fill in the repeated phrase, "I'm afraid it won't come up."
- Extend the story by asking the children what they think the little boy is going to do with the huge carrot. What would they do if they had a huge carrot?
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Ideas for Reading the Books (continued)

Examples of Possible Vocabulary Words

- Garden
- Planted
- Seeds
- Weeds
- Sprinkled
- Water
- Carrots
- Acorns
- Eggshells
- Flower pots
- Soil
- Skin
- Root hairs
- Shoots
- Blossoms
- Flowers
- Shovel
- Watering can
- Hose
- Hoe
- Wheelbarrow
- Windowsill

Circle Time

Make circle time a fun group activity when you read *How a Seed Grows*. Read the beginning pages that show what different seeds look like. Have the materials ready to do the activity that starts on page 9 (12 eggshells, pencil or sharp object to make holes in the eggshells, soil, bean seeds, water, marker to number the eggshells, egg carton).

Let the children help as you number each eggshell and then plant the seeds. When you finish, put the egg carton on the windowsill so it has enough sunlight to grow! Explain to the children that in a few days, you will dig up seed number 1 and see what it looks like. You will wait a few more days and then dig up seed number 2 and see what the seed looks like. The book gives ideas about what the children might find as they dig up the seeds. See the writing and science activity listed below to follow up on this activity.

Field Trip

Take a field trip to Danville Gardens, the park, a farm or just take a walk in the neighborhood and take pictures of flowers, plants and trees. You might also try taking a walk at different times of the year and take pictures of the same flowers, plants and trees so children can compare the differences. Make a class book of your walks.

Name Game

Make a list of the children’s names and then have everyone try to think of garden words (flowers, fruits, trees, vegetables, tools) that start with the first letter of the children’s names. Examples: Sam/soil, Tonya/tulips, Bobby/blossoms, Ryan/root.

Insects in the Garden

Expand on the garden theme by talking about how worms and bees help our gardens grow! There are some fun websites to get facts about worms as well as building worm farms. Check out [www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/worms/](http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/worms/) (The Adventures of Herman: The Autobiography of Squirmin’ Herman the Worm) for fun facts about worms, what they like to eat, where they live and much more! *Bee and Me* by Elle J. McGuinness is a fun, fiction book with facts about bees and the important job they have in helping flowers and plants grow.

Bee & Me

Seeds Get Around

*Seeds Get Around* is another fun book to read for this theme. Try reading the book outside in a field of dandelions. Or pick some dandelions to show the children as you read the book.
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When using any of the ideas listed below, remember to tell children about the activities and show examples of some of the things that they can do at the centers. Talk about how the activities relate to the book.

**Sample: Writing Center**

Take pictures to document what the seeds look like each time you dig up the bean seeds in the activity from *How a Seed Grows*. Make copies of the pictures and put them in the writing center along with labels for each stage. Help the children make their own books or a class book about how seeds grow. Make sure to take pictures as you plant the seeds in the numbered eggshells for the beginning of the book. Putting the book together will help children put the story in sequence as well as practice vocabulary such as seeds, soil, eggshells, watering can, skin, root hairs, shoots, windowsill, and more!

**Sample: Small Group**

Make cards with vocabulary words written at the bottom such as weeds, seeds, shoots, root hairs, blossoms and soil. Let the children glue real seeds, shoots, soil, root hairs, blossoms, and weeds on the pictures. Help the children figure out which vocabulary words the print on the cards represents (try to sound out the words, point out beginning, middle and ending sounds, letters), so they will know what to glue on the card. After the children make the vocabulary cards, use them during center time to practice vocabulary words, letters and sounds.

**Sample: Dramatic Play Center**

Provide materials for making a pretend garden store. For the garden store you might have aprons, a cash register and money, flower catalogs & magazines, garden tools, watering cans, seed packets, potting soil, flowers, flower pots (paper cups or egg cartons), vases, plastic fences, gardening gloves, and a small wheelbarrow. Make sure to have paper and markers so the children can name their store, label and price the flowers. After they buy their supplies, they can plant their seeds in flower pots, paper cups or egg cartons.

**Sample: Math Center**

- As the bean seeds begin to grow, have the children measure the different plants and record them on a chart. They can use the numbers on the eggshells to record the plant growth. You can also plant different kinds of seeds and have the children record plant growth. Talk about why different seeds grow faster than others.
- Grow grass seeds on a sponge and let children measure and chart the growth.
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Sample: Art Center

Glue seeds on the letter “S” and have children trace the letter with their fingers. You could also have the word “seed” printed on paper and have them glue seeds on all of the letters. Talk about the letters as the children make their “seed” pictures.

Show children the picture in the book How a Seed Grows that shows acorns and an oak tree. Use acorns just like those in the book to paint pictures. Take a box top with a piece of white paper taped in the bottom. Have several colors of paint for the children to choose and pour on the white paper. Let the children put several acorns in the box, tilt the box top back and forth to roll the acorns around.

Provide materials for children to make a garden picture (old seed packets, gardening magazines and catalogues; magazines with pictures of flowers, plants, vegetables and tools, construction paper, different colored felt for making flowers, glue, scissors, colored craft sticks, seeds, markers, pipe cleaners, tissue paper, green Easter egg grass, honeycomb cereal for bee hives). Label the flowers, plants, vegetables and tools as the children tell you about their gardens.

Sample: Science Center

Make a worm farm using the directions from preschoolrock.com (click on preschool science and nature, then click on preschool entomology to find the directions). Children will learn many things from this activity: how to find worms, worms live in dirt and like to tunnel, worms like the dark, what worms like to eat, and why putting worms in soil makes it better for plants. The website will tell you the materials you need to build the worm farm as well as how to do it. Don’t forget to use the website mentioned earlier (www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/worms/) to add fun information about worms!

An alternative to the activity in the How Seeds Grow book is to plant a seed in a plastic bag so children can watch the plant grow. To do this, take a wet paper towel and fold it to make a pocket for the seed. Place the towel and seed into the plastic bag and tape it to a window in the classroom (if possible, tape it at the children’s eye level). Check the seed everyday. Take pictures of the changes or have the children draw pictures to record the changes.